OVER THE LINE

HAROLD M. SHERMAN

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Books by

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INTERFERENCE
OVER THE LINE
STRIKE HIM OUT

OVER THE LINE

BY

HAROLD M. SHERMAN

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INTRODUCTION

When a new fellow moves into the neighborhood, you look him over, strike up an acquaintance and sort of go around with him, but not until he shows the sort of stuff he's made of do you take him into the gang and make a real pal of him, or else let him alone, as the case may be.

It's somewhat the same with a new book. You look through it, read it and if it's good stuff, the author, like the new chap in the neighborhood, becomes one of the gang. And when such an author keeps on producing sure fire stuff, like Harold M. Sherman has been doing, there is no doubt at all that his books will be read.

This book deals with the mental hazard that has been the downfall of so many chaps. But Judd Billings overcomes his obstacle while still at high school and how he later makes a name for himself at college, makes this a book that will be instantly liked by all who read it. In fact, all one need say is that it is a Harold M. Sherman book.

J. D. V.

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CHAPTER I

THE STRANGE CONTRACT

"Judd, I'd rather a fellow would be anything else but a quitter!"

Judd jumped to his feet, eyes blazing.

"I'm not a quitter . . . but I'm not gonna go back to school!"

Bob Billings, older brother, stared for a moment, unanswering. Judd had come on to the city to visit him during summer vacation. Since the father's death and Bob's attending Bartlett College, there had been little chance for the two to be together, especially with Bob employed in the Star Sporting Goods store, miles away from Trumbull, the little town near which the Billings family lived.

"You've got to get a hold on yourself," Bob said, finally, "I'd no idea you'd gotten this way. You're babying yourself out of everything you'd really like to do. And here I'd counted on your taking up on that Trumbull High team where I left off! No reason why you couldn't either . . . you've got a much better physique than I have. That work on our farm has given you the muscles of an ox. You've got a grip in those hands that

would make most fellows yell for help. Only trouble with you is—you don't know your own strength and you're afraid to use it. Right now a much smaller guy could tie you into bow knots!"

Judd's face flushed. He had a great deal of respect for his older brother, Bob. It was Bob who had written the greatest athletic page in Trumbull High history by his feats in baseball, football and track. And then, when the war had broken out, it was Bob who had enlisted in the air service and come back from abroad with the Croix de Guerre and a distinguished service medal with several citations for bravery. And now, as a senior at Bartlett College, it was Bob who was heralded as the outstanding member of the football team. Yes—there was no question about it—Bob was a *he* man!

To follow in the footsteps of such a brother was indeed an honor—or was it a hardship? When Judd Billings had entered high school the students looked upon him with expectant awe. Wasn't he the brother of the great Bob Billings? Surely he would carry on the tradition of the family. More great things would be forthcoming. Judd's big-boned, awkward frame was pointed out with high glee. He was a trifle taller and pounds heavier than Bob had been. What might this mean when he got under way? Give him time and then look for some more records to be broken!

But those who prophesied big things for Judd did not take the matter of temperament into consideration. Judd was as different from Bob as Saturday was from Sunday. It did not take the students long to discover that he was unusually shy and self-conscious. Judd would almost jump at his own shadow. He avoided crowds and made friends slowly. As for competition, he apparently detested it, retracing his steps rather than encounter physical conflict. And so, when he might have been the idol of the entire school, Judd soon became the object of disgust.

"My eyes!" he would offer as excuse for his not taking up with sports. It was true that he had had some trouble with his eyes but townspeople shook their heads and said wisely that Judd's eyes were only serving as his alibi. The trouble was more deep-rooted than that.

"I'll tell you what's wrong with Judd!" explained old Mr. Bailey, proprietor of the Trumbull General Store, "I used to know his Dad, Jim Billings. He was a steady customer of mine up to the time of his death and some man he was, too! As husky a farmer as I ever see! He didn't have any use for mollycoddles and he brought his oldest boy, Bob, up to fight his own battles, not wasting any sympathy on him. But Judd came along seven years after Bob and he missed out on old Jim's disciplinin'. With the father dead,

Judd came under his mother's care and Mrs. Billings has sure put her boy on the toboggan. You see she's so nervous and scarey that she imagines terrible things are going to happen to everybody. She hasn't let Judd go skating on the bay for fear the ice might break. She's against his going into sports because he might get injured. She's made a hothouse plant out of that big, strapping fellow and I say it's a cryin' shame because Judd's got the same stuff in him his father was made of if he could only get it out. Wish Judd could be around Bob for awhile. That's the kind of association he needs!"

Mrs. Billings, well meaning though she had been, realized finally that something must be done about Judd. Her anxious attention had been divided between him and the operation of the farm, Hank Duncan, Jim Billings' hired man, had taken charge of the place with Jim's passing, Mrs. Billings insisting that Bob secure the college education which he had planned before going into service.

"I can't understand what is the matter with Judd," she wrote her older son early in June, "I've tried to give him every opportunity and to do everything for him I thought best, but he has just failed in one subject and was barely conditioned in two others. He is so discouraged that he says he's not going to continue in high school.

He wants to find a job and get to work. What would you advise?"

Bob, on receipt of this letter, had thought matters over carefully . . . gravely. Just half a block from the small bachelor apartment he occupied was a spacious city park with baseball diamonds, a football field and tennis courts. It had been his habit to keep in trim for football season by working out in the park during the summer. If he could get Judd to spend the summer with him he would do what he could to make him over.

The temptation to accept Bob's invitation had been too great for Judd to refuse. He was mortally sick of his associations at Trumbull. Every place he went reminded him of some failure he had made. He was looked down upon by fellows his own age. Few ever taunted him openly. Judd felt that this was out of respect for the fact that he was the brother of the great Bob. Just why he should be different than the other fellows was something he couldn't figure out and his humiliation at failing in his school work had caused him to feel that he could never face his schoolmates again.

Seeing how set Judd was against returning to school, Bob wisely refrained from forcing the issue. He was glad that Judd had instantly reacted to the charge of "quitter." As long as a

fellow had the fight spirit in him there was some hope.

"I'm going out for a little workout with the football tonight," Bob informed, "Got to keep in training, you know. Like to come out and chase the ball for me?"

Judd consented begrudgingly but, before Bob's practice was over, he began to betray genuine interest. Bob showed him how to throw the pigskin and he found it great fun to lay the ball on his hand and sail it through the air in spiral flight after recovering Bob's kicks.

"Say, Judd!" Bob called, "You might get down the field and catch these punts. It'll save you chasing them after they strike."

Judd moved slowly to the place Bob indicated, not wanting to reveal his growing interest too plainly. Bob kicked. The ball, turning end over end, carried almost exactly to the place Judd was standing. He moved a few steps to the side and reached up his arms but his judgment of distance was poor. The ball struck him a smarting blow in the face and bounced away. Judd, over-balanced, fell to the ground.

Bob trotted up to Judd and dragged him to his feet.

"What's the matter, Buddy?"

Judd showed him the spot over his eye, a slight skin bruise.

"Oh, why that's nothing. Come on, let's try another." Bob picked up the ball.

"No . . . see . . . it's bleeding." Judd displayed some drops of blood on his handkerchief. "I reckon I'd better go to the room and sterilize it. I don't want to get blood poisoning, you know."

Bob laughed. "Tommy rot! Whoever gave you such silly ideas? Forget it!"

Judd's feelings were wounded. "You can't tell what'll happen if you don't take care of yourself. I heard of a fellah once . . ."

"See here, Judd! Get those wild imaginings out of your head. How far do you think we'd get in this world if every time a little thing happened to us we sat down to worry about it and to think up lots worse things happening?"

But Judd was done for the afternoon. He turned and walked away, dabbing his handkerchief tenderly to the bruise and sympathizing with himself. He should have known better than to have played with Bob. He might have been sure that something like this would happen. There were so many things that a fellow had to watch out for! But after Judd had reached the apartment and looked at himself in the glass and been convinced that his hurt did not amount to so much after all, he reflected—with a smile—that chasing the football had been real sport.

The next time Judd accompanied Bob to the park the great Bob taught him how to stand and how to hold his hands in catching a punt. At first Judd was a bit reluctant to get in the path of a twisting football again but he gradually overcame this fear and found, to his delight, that he could catch some of the longest punts with ease. Bob was kicking the ball forty and fifty yards at a kick and most of the punts Judd had to run in order to get under. After a particularly long chase, in which Judd reached up and just managed to catch the ball on the tips of his fingers, Bob shouted from down the field: "That's the pep! Great stuff, Buddy!"

Judd no longer tried to disguise his interest in football. He was enjoying these practice sessions hugely. He got so that he looked forward to them. Bob loaned him a part of an old football suit so that they could rough it up more, as he said. Judd wondered, a bit guiltily, what his mother would say if she knew what he was doing.

Gradually Bob taught Judd the fundamentals of the game. He did it in an off-hand way so that Judd would not anticipate the reason. Judd had said no more about getting a job but Bob had noticed his brother scanning the want-ads in the paper. He smiled as he noted little evidences that Judd was developing more initiative. Perhaps he

might even get enough courage to go out and apply for a job himself!

The weather grew almost unbearably hot as July neared August. But Bob told Judd that perspiration was good for him so they continued to work out on such late afternoons as Bob could get away.

One afternoon Bob said to Judd: "You're learning football pretty fast, Buddy. You've been booting that ball for thirty to forty yards every kick; your passing is good and you can grab almost every ball you get your hands on. Now let's see how good you are at tackling. I'm going to take the ball and run right at you. It's up to you to down me."

Judd did not take kindly to this idea. It was different, just playing with a football and not having anyone to interfere with you. But this stopping of a man when he was running by grabbing him and hanging on until you brought him to the ground was no fun. What if? . . . and a dozen visions of possible happenings flashed across Judd's mind.

"I—I—not today," said Judd, hoping that Bob would not push the suggestion.

"Come on. There's nothing going to hurt you!" Bob trotted down the field fifteen yards. He turned about and crouched forward, ready to start. "Look out! Here I come!"

The sight of Bob coming toward him terrified Judd. It seemed that Bob's knees were moving up past his head and his feet were digging the turf in a plunging drive. As Bob neared him Judd quickly side-stepped and avoided contact with him. Bob cut into the sod with his feet and swung around in a half-circle, bringing up short. "What's the matter? Afraid?"

Judd didn't answer. He was scared stiff. He wanted to run. Why, if he had not stepped out of the way he might have suffered serious injury! Who could stop a charging pair of feet and a bullet-like head? Besides, in such moments, Judd was conscious that he was facing the great Bob instead of just his brother. He felt his own insignificance.

"Judd, there's no more likelihood of anything happening to you here than any place else. It's all a matter of knowing how and then it's just as easy as catching a football. It looks hard only to those who have not learned. Let me show you." And Bob demonstrated to Judd the correct way to tackle.

"I'll not run hard the first few times," said Bob, considerately, "Just try it out."

Judd was trembling. His knees seemed weak. He was trying to tell himself that he was not afraid. He knew that what his brother had told him was so but he dreaded physical contact. Bob

did not give him much time for reflection. He was coming at him again!

Judd did not wish to appear a coward in the eyes of Bob. He was almost as afraid not to tackle as he was to tackle. While he was trying to make up his mind Bob was upon him and Judd made a wild clutching dive forward. His arms closed about Bob's legs at a point midway between the hips and the knees, there was a jolting impact and the ground seemed to rise to hit him. Judd sat up to take stock of his injuries. He found, to his pleased surprise, that he was unhurt.

"Bully work!" complimented Bob, warmly, "Your first tackle was a peach!"

Judd felt his courage and self-confidence rise like the mercury in a thermometer. He was finding out that many of his old fears had been groundless. Bob ran straight at Judd a dozen times and each time Judd brought him to the ground.

"All right, Buddy. Now I'm going to get by you. I'm not going to use the straight arm. I'll show you about that later. But I'm coming at you like an express train. Try to stop me if you can!"

There was a challenge in Bob's words. Judd sensed his first big thrill of competition. Bob said he was coming through. Well, he was going to stop him!

Bob ran at Judd viciously and with all the speed

at his command. Judd came forward to meet him. He saw two clock-like legs and a body bent close to the ground. He dove low in order to reach him. Then it seemed as if a dozen knees struck him thudding blows in the face. He felt himself being dragged along the ground. His hold on the one foot loosened. He hit the ground heavily and was dimly conscious of feet pounding the earth. Bob had gone through!

It was such experiences as this that sickened Judd. All the pleasure of football was gone for him now. He had a bump over one eye and a patch of skin off his chin. There was no answering spirit of fight. Judd lay where he had fallen.

Bob waited, hoping that Judd would show the spunk to get up. He had subjected his younger brother to rough treatment but he had done it for a purpose.

"I'm sorry, Buddy. You tackled too low . . . and you didn't hang on tight enough after you grabbed me. You see, I kept on going and I got away from you."

Judd raised up, dazedly. He was not interested in why he had failed to stop Bob. He was concerned over the bumping he had received.

"Am I—am I hurt very bad?" he asked, tremulously.

Bob laughed. "Not bad enough to mention," he said, "You'll stop me next time, eh Buddy?"

Judd shook his head.

"No . . . there's not gonna be any next time, I—I'm through."

Bob knew better than to argue with him when he felt this way. He picked up the football and walked off the field. Judd gladly followed.

Several days later, when Bob returned from work, he noticed that Judd was red-eyed. On the table lay some newspaper clippings. They were want ads.

"Well, what did you do today?" asked Bob, casually.

"I—I was out looking for work."

Bob whistled. "Well! Did you find anything?"

"No."

"Oh, I see—you answered these ads here—may I look them over?"

Judd nodded his consent.

"H-h-hm! Maxwell's! That's a good place. 'Clerk wanted. Young man preferred. No experience necessary. Good opportunity for advancement.' What did they say when you applied?"

Judd was silent. Bob waited an appreciable moment for him to reply. "Did some other fellow beat you to the place?"

Judd found his voice. "N-no—but—but they wanted a young man who had at least a high-school education."

Bob had a wave of sympathy for his younger brother. "But here's another good place, Buddy. Jackson and Ballard's! You've picked some good ones. 'Filing clerk wanted. We teach you our system. Young man with ambition to get ahead in our line of work desired.' How about this?"

Judd hesitated. "They seemed interested. Then they asked me how much education I'd had. They said they wanted some one that they could send right on up as soon as he got to know the business. They said it was their experience that fellows with high school educations were better fitted for the work. . . ."

Bob was glad that Judd had had this experience. He knew that there were plenty of places that Judd could get work but the better institutions where opportunities for real advancement were greatest almost demanded that a young man's qualifications include a reasonable amount of education.

"Well . . . buck up, Buddy. There's always a way out and you're young yet!"

Tears came anew to Judd's eyes. He turned away from Bob, ashamed.

"Why—Buddy—what's the matter?"

"I—I didn't know I could feel this way."

"How do you feel?"

"I—I dunno. I guess I'm homesick."

Bob's eyes blurred. He himself had scarcely been back to Trumbull for three years.

"Well, you'll soon be back, Buddy . . . with mother. Summer vacation is about over. I expect she's missed you a lot too. She's tried to do the very best she knew how for you. . . . Perhaps I can come up later and . . . and see you play football."

Judd started. Bob almost regretted that he had taken the liberty to make this suggestion. He had tried to do it casually as if playing football would be the natural thing for Judd to do. And he had not mentioned school although to play football would imply attending school. Judd looked at Bob sharply. His emotions were conflicting. He would like to do so many things if . . .

"But mother wouldn't hear to my playin'," objected Judd at last. This seemed the most logical excuse he could think of. "Anyhow, I am not goin' back to school." This came as an after thought.

"Well . . . I'm glad you are going back to Trumbull any way," replied Bob, "I think you will be able to take better care of yourself." There were lots of things he would like to have said to Judd but Bob somehow did not feel that it would be wise. Judd must be allowed to think things out for himself.

When the morning arrived for Judd's departure, Bob who had to go on to work, bade his younger brother good-bye at the apartment.

"I'm leaving you a contract, Buddy, and a little note. As soon as I've gone I want you to read them. If, after thinking it over, you are willing to sign the contract, leave the duplicate for me on the table. I want you to know that whatever you do I'm for you. You're going to make good as soon as you forget yourself. You'll understand what I mean some day. Good-bye. Tell mother I'll get up to see her this fall sure. Good luck!"

Judd sat wonderingly, holding the folded slips of paper that Bob had placed in his hand. What did Bob mean by the word "Contract?" Why should his brother leave him a note? Why couldn't he tell him what he wanted to without putting it on paper? This was a funny way of doing things!

He opened the note and read: Dear Buddy— It's easier to tell you what I have in mind on paper than it is face to face. And I think you will realize it when you have read what I have to say. The contract I have drawn up is to be strictly between you and me. No one else is to see it or know anything about it. I think that it will help you to agree to do certain things for awhile until you can get yourself to agree to do them without any outside influence. There will be times when you

will have to make yourself go through experiences distasteful to you. But you will come out bigger and better for them. The keeping of this contract is strictly a matter of honor so if you do not intend to live up to it, do not be dishonest with yourself by signing it. I'm sorry that I can't be with you. But it's distinctly your fight. You're the one who has to face the music and about all anyone else could do would be to offer encouragement or advice. You'll have to make the decisions and do the acting. I'd like to see you go back to school and go out for football. I think you could make the team. And some day, when you break loose, you will astonish yourself. You've got a fine physique. There's nothing weak about you. Most of your troubles are in your mind. Come on, Buddy, let's see you make a whirlwind comeback. You can do it!"

Judd read the note over three times before he laid it down and gave his earnest attention to the contract. The contract was brief but stern in its requirements. It read:

I, the undersigned, do hereby agree, being bound by my honor, to live up to the following declarations to wit:

1. I will not "baby" myself at any time and under any provocation.
2. Whatever happens to me I will grin and bear it.
3. If I meet with failure in anything I

am trying to do I will not cease trying nor lose faith in myself. Rather will I make a greater effort than before to succeed.

4. I will pay no attention to what others may think or say of me. I will let nothing keep me from doing what I know is right.

5. In the event that I do not live up to this contract I will write and tell my brother, Bob Billings, of the specific instances.

6. When I feel inclined not to do what I feel to be right, I will take out this contract and read it over until I have renewed my spirit and developed a determination strong enough to go ahead.

This contract signed by me in good faith and with the knowledge that the penalty for breaking same will be exacted in the doing.

. . . . . .

My Signature.

As Judd read the contract, which had been typed in duplicate by Bob at the office, he suddenly began to realize some of his shortcomings of the past and the reasons for them. He studied the contract for half an hour. Then he went to the table drawer, took out pen and ink, and scribbled his name on the line left for his signature.

Judd felt like he had won a great victory as he locked the apartment door and jumped the street-car for the depot. He could hardly wait to get back to Trumbull . . . and to re-enter school!

Mrs. Billings was overjoyed that Judd had

decided to return to school but she was rather alarmed at a change which she discerned in him. There was a more determined look about his face —a look that told her Judd was going to do some things which he had never attempted to do before and Mrs. Billings was not quite certain what the outcome would be.

When school opened, the schoolmates noticed the change too. They didn't know what it meant but they did know that Judd walked with his head erect, there was a surer swing to his steps, and he looked folks straight in the eye. Judd was silent. His jaws were set tight. No one sensed the fight that was going on within—no one realized that every move Judd made was forced.

When the first call went out for football candidates, Judd hunted up Coach Little and submitted his name. He had thought about the moment when he would do this for days. And each time that he thought of it the nervous chills raced up and down his back. He had hoped that when the time really came he could find courage to go through with it.

Coach Little could not conceal his astonishment when Judd confronted him. For two years the coach had begged Judd to get out for the team. He saw in the well-built youth the makings of a fine player. Trumbull High was a small school. It needed all available material. A boy who was

physically fit for football and who did not get out for practice was regarded as disloyal. No wonder that the students felt this way about it with rivalry so keen between Trumbull and Canton high schools! Trumbull's colors had trailed in the dust for three consecutive years. This season the students had early begun to clamor for revenge.

"Glad to see you getting out, Billings," Coach Little said to him, pleasantly. "I believe you should develop into a good player."

Some of the old football players crowded about. They eyed Judd unbelievingly. "What, Judd going out for football?" The surprise was so great that there was not an answering echo of enthusiasm. Judd was yet untried. They had never seen him do anything noteworthy. Judd had existed apart from them and their activities. He could not expect to be readily accepted into the ranks of those who had been proven under fire. Judd backed away, feeling self-conscious. As he left the crowd his face flushed crimson at a low-voiced remark which reached him. "Hump! He won't last long! He's got a streak of yellow a yard wide all the way down his spine!"

When Judd asked his mother for money to purchase football togs she knew that her intuition had been correct. Mrs. Billings sat staring at him for a moment. Judd was hoping that his mother

would refuse him. His own decision was weakening. He still had a chance to get out of it. His eyes . . . his studies . . . he would have to make up some work in order to be eligible to play . . . there were so many convenient excuses. . . . And if his mother should put her foot down it would be so much easier to withdraw. Mrs. Billings was having a struggle too. She was picturing her guarded care of the boy and contrasting his life for the first time with that of Bob's. Was it right, after all, to keep a boy from athletics? What had her plan done for Judd? It had made of him a coward, a boy who was afraid of himself and afraid of other people. Mrs. Billings turned to the drawer and took out the money, handing it over to Judd.

Judd took the money and hurried out. His heart was pounding strangely. To think that his mother had changed! She, of all people! What had come over her? Now there was no backing out. He must go ahead. He had gotten his foot in it. Why had he been so forward? No one had expected him to go out for football. They would have let him alone. It would be a bigger disgrace to go out and fail than not to go out at all. At least this is the way it seemed to Judd. And he was afraid of failing more than anything else.

CHAPTER II.

JUDD GRITS HIS TEETH

Judd was the object of curious eyes the first night out. Coach Little kept the squad busy passing the football about, kicking and catching punts. Judd was exceedingly nervous. He dropped several punts, muffed passes and when the ball was given him to kick, missed it completely due to over anxious embarrassment. The sight was highly amusing to the rest of the squad, all of whom could boast of some football experience. Coach Little sought to have the boys show respect to Judd, appreciating his feelings. Judd knew that he could do better; he knew that he had not forgotten the points drilled into him by Bob. But putting this knowledge into execution before a field of players whom he felt had the "show me" attitude, was a different matter.

The news spread throughout Trumbull that Judd Billings, kid brother of the great Bob, had at last gotten into athletics. On the heels of this news came the word that he was the laughing stock of the football squad. He was the crudest, awkwardest, greenest candidate that had ever put in appearance on the Trumbull gridiron. No

danger of his ever picking up the laurels won for the Billings family by the older brother! Judd was a joke. But though the grown folks smiled at the reports they remarked that people would have to give Judd credit. Something must have come over the boy to cause him to get out for the team. Why he had not even engaged in a game of tiddly-winks before!

Judd went home from the first scrimmage with an aching body. He had been placed in the line of one of the picked teams made up by Coach Little and it had seemed to Judd that every play was directed at him. Time and again he was on the bottom of the heap. He could feel the players piling on top of him and on several occasions his face was plowed in the dirt. Judd wasn't hurt. He marvelled at this. An there had been a certain thrill in the moments that he had managed to grasp the man with the ball and hang on until he had brought him down. But Judd was not sure that he liked this rough treatment.

That night Judd wrote to Bob. He had been reading his contract over. There had come to him a strong temptation to quit. Several fellows had gotten bruised in practice. Jimmy Blackwell had the skin taken off his knuckles when someone stepped on his hand; Harry Knowlton got a clip over one eye; Tom Barley had his wind knocked out. It would be but a matter of time before

something happened to him. In the letter to Bob, he wrote: "I don't know why I'm so timid. I don't feel scared inside but something keeps me from going only so far. I know I can do better but I don't. We had our first scrimmage today. Some of the fellows got bunged up. They didn't seem to mind it. I guess they're made different than I am."

Bob was glad that Judd had taken to writing him. If Judd could only confide his feelings in some one he would perhaps be able to keep up his morale. It helped to know that someone understood what you were going through. With Bob it had been his father. He must take the father's place with Judd. Bob answered back: "Stick to it, Buddy. Each time you win makes the next victory that much easier. And one of these days it will take an earthquake to jar you!"

Judd gritted his teeth and went back to practice. He tried to forget himself—to play with a carefree abandon. He tried not to think of the consequences in advance. When he could get this attitude he noticed that he seemed to play better. One instance was particularly striking. Blackwell, fullback on the regulars for two seasons, had broken through the line and was away for an open field run. It looked like he was good for a touchdown. Judd found himself free and in position to give pursuit. He thought only of

downing Blackwell. The fullback had a five yard lead on him. Judd raced after him and caught up to him after a twenty yard run. He left the ground in a flying tackle and pinioned Blackwell from behind, bringing him heavily to earth. When Judd realized what he had done he was shaky for the remainder of the practice. He might have been badly hurt!

But such brilliant flashes of playing convinced Coach Little that Billings had some real football ability in him. Judd had been studying doggedly to make up his school work. There might be a possibility of his being used before the year was out. When the coach cut the squad he placed Billings as a substitute on the second team.

With the first three games on the schedule played, the students and townspeople awoke to the realization that Trumbull High had the best football team in years. The football warriors had soundly trimmed every opponent and had kept their goal line uncrossed, piling up a total of 117 points!

One night the coach gave the second team some of the plays that were used by Ashton High, Trumbull's next opponent. He wanted to see what defense his regulars could offer against them. The Ashton team built their plays around one player, their fullback. He was a big fellow and exceptionally fast. Because Billings appeared to

be about his physical equal, Coach Little motioned him to the fullback position. Burton, second team quarterback, outlined to Billings the plays he was to use.

Judd was excited and a bit confused. This was the first time he had ever been called upon to run with the ball. He did not relish the thought of being tackled. It was bad enough to tackle anyone but to be thrown yourself seemed worse. Sometimes several fellows hit you at once and then more fell on you.

Judd nodded vaguely to Burton's instructions. The first play called for a cross-buck over left guard. The second team's line opened a hole; Judd received the ball and followed Burton through. He saw Burton go down, bumped solidly against some bodies in the line, felt a grip on one leg, then saw a clear field ahead. Judd ran like a scared deer. He did not care to be tackled from behind. The only way to prevent it was to outdistance everyone. But he did not reckon on the last line of defense. Blackwell, first team fullback, was charging in. Judd tried to dodge him. It did not occur to him to stiff arm. He stopped dead in his tracks.

Blackwell's tackle hit Judd with jolting force. It would not have shaken him up so much if Judd had been running at the instant. Coach Little, who a moment before had chuckled with glee at

the way Judd went through the line, now turned away with an exclamation of disgust. Billings was a physical coward. Everyone on both teams knew it now. Some of the spectators began to jeer. "What d'ya stop for? Afraid he was gonna hit ya? You oughta get hurt!"

Burton came running up and helped the dazed Billings to his feet. "What's the matter?" he blazed, "Did you forget something? We had a chance for a touchdown and we haven't whipped the firsts this year!"

Coach Little called Billings off the field.

The hard games on the schedules were coming up now and every practice session was vitally important. The team carried its string of victories to six with three more games to play before the season's end.

Attention was centered on the final contest with Canton High. This school was the largest in the district. It seemed as if it always turned out a good football team. And this year was no exception. As phenomenal as had been Trumbull's season, the Canton High eleven had won greater laurels. Canton had played some of the best schools in the state and had emerged victorious. It would be hard to prophesy what would happen when Canton met Trumbull. State sporting authorities began to figure the Canton-Trumbull encounter a mythical championship battle provid-

ing both elevens won the remaining games on their schedules.

Billings' sad showing that one practice session had kept him on the sidelines every scrimmage thereafter. The players exhibited sullen contempt for him. And just as Judd had begun to win back some of their respect too. But they might have known that he would turn out that way.

Judd brooded over his situation. Oddly enough he did not mind what fellow players thought or said of him. He was having his hardest time trying to keep from babying himself. Finally Judd decided that he needed help. He did not have strength enough to force himself to do what he knew he should do. Judd stopped Coach Little as the coach was leaving the field one night.

"Could I see you a moment, sir?"

The coach paused. His mind was on the next game. He had a dozen problems to solve. What could Billings want? Was he going to resign at last? Billings had stuck longer than the Coach had thought he would. Somehow he felt a peculiar sympathy for the lad.

"Well, what is it, Judd?"

Judd hesitated until the other players were out of earshot. They looked back curiously. He heard one of them say, "I thought so. Billings is tryin' to get in soft with the coach now. Alibi Ike!"

Hot tears came to Judd's eyes. He turned to the coach pleadingly.

"Please sir, I'm not a quitter. . . . I'm not yellow . . . that is, not really. . . . I didn't want to stop when I saw I was going to be tackled. Something else made me. . . . I—I can't make myself do what I want to do. . . . I . . .

The coach studied Billings sympathetically.

"You'd what?"

"I'd like to have you make me do what I can't make myself do . . . force me to get in there and play . . . I . . . I'm not asking for mercy . . . or . . . or to be favored. No matter what I do, I don't care if you beat me or what happens . . . I want to get over feeling like I do about myself!"

This was a most unusual request. To Coach Little there flashed a small appreciation of the struggle that Billings must be undergoing. He laid a hand on his shoulder.

"I'm sorry, Billings. You're up against a tough fight. Some fellows never get over it. Just seems like they can't entirely break it. The season is so far along now that I don't know whether I'll have a chance to help you much. Keep a stiff upper lip. Don't take the game so seriously. You're too tense. Relax. If you do this you will not take yourself so seriously and it will help you. I'm glad you spoke to me about this. I'm glad you realize what is wrong. Keep saying to yourself,

'I will do this' and 'I will do that' and if you can say it until you believe it, nothing can stop you from doing it."

Judd thanked the coach for giving him this advice and immediately felt better. He went home with a lighter heart than he had had in weeks.

CHAPTER III

A KICKER IS DISCOVERED

Trumbull High put the skids under Newton Academy in the next to the last game of the season but in so doing the eleven lost the services of its star fullback, Jimmy Blackwell, who suffered a badly sprained ankle. There was gloom in Trumbull that night. Chances were that Blackwell had played his last game for the school and chances were that Trumbull would be no match for Canton High with Blackwell out of the lineup.

Coach Little had no player on the string of first substitutes who could begin to fill Blackwell's shoes. He moved Rudolph, second team fullback, up to Blackwell's position after some consideration. Rudolph was short but stockily built—a good little man. The boy would need a great deal of grooming but he seemed the only one available. In looking about for someone to fill the vacancy on the second team left by Rudolph's advancement, Coach Little thought of Billings. Why not? There was a slight possibility . . . one never could tell. . . .

When Judd was notified that he was to take the fullback position on the second team he was totally

unnerved by the shock. He couldn't sleep for dreaming of what would probably happen to him in scrimmage. The players would all be laying for him. They thought him a physical coward and they would show no mercy. He had done nothing to command their respect. Now that his opportunity had come to redeem himself, he didn't want it. But when school was over the next afternoon, Judd found himself in the dressing room preparing for that which he feared the most.

Just outside, Burton, second team quarterback, was talking to some of his players. "Say, fellows, I just heard the Coach put Judd in at full. Some joke, huh? Watch me. I'll give him the ball everytime I get a chance. We'll run him ragged. When he gets through scrimmage today he'll wish he'd never seen a football." The players laughed and sided in with Burton.

Judd finished tying his shoe and stood up, shakily. He had heard what was said. He dreaded to go out on the field. He was the last one to leave the dressing room. No one paid any attention to him. Oh, if he could just crawl off some where—some place where everyone would let him alone and where no harm could befall him! The shrill blast of the whistle caused him to run toward the field. The teams were lining up. . . .

The kickoff came straight for Judd. He caught

the ball and started off, dazedly. He ran five, ten, fifteen yards. Then two tacklers struck him at once before he had time to dodge. He went down with a thud. He was dragged to his feet and pushed into position. Burton began calling signals. He glanced meaningly at Judd. It was his number! Judd was slow in taking the ball. He was thrown for a two yard loss. He heard Burton bawling him out and telling him to "get in there and play, you big dub!" The ball went to Judd again. He followed his interference around the end for a bare yard. He was not putting any drive into his playing.

On the fourth down Burton motioned Judd back and signified that he was to kick. The ball was on the second team's twenty-seven yard line. Judd nervously scraped a level place for him in the sod. The ball snapped back to him. He saw the lines break as his foot swung up to meet the ball. There was an impact as the punt got under way. The next instant Judd landed on his back as Fenstermaker, first team guard, bumped roughly into him.

Coach Little, on the sidelines, whistled his surprise. The punt carried forty-five yards! Rudolph, who caught it, was downed in his tracks. Burton came running up to Judd, in sudden elation, and patted him on the back. "That's the stuff, Judd, old boy. Some punt!" This compliment

stimulated Judd and gave him more confidence. He began to forget himself.

Scrimmage that night ended in a hard-earned victory for the first team, 7 to 0. The second team had put up a stubborn defense and Billings' toe had kept the regulars from rolling up the score. Billings had not shown to advantage in carrying the ball. He had fumbled on several occasions and he could not hit the line. But great governor, how he could kick!

Coach Little recognized in Billings the best kicker in the school. He was up against it for material in the fullback position. Rudolph did not excel in kicking. He was a good line plunger and fairly fast around the ends. Blackwell had been a triple threat player. There was a remote possibility that Blackwell might be able to get in part of the Canton High game. If Billings were not afraid of himself and had had more experience! The coach had an idea. He called the second team quarterback to him.

"Burton, I want you to take Billings aside and train him in all the second team plays. Give him the first team signals and plays too. Teach Billings what you can."

Burton did not question Coach Little. He had learned to obey orders. And besides, Burton had to admit—secretly—that his estimation of Billings had been raised. He had called upon Judd

to carry the ball at least half of the time. Each time Judd had responded. True, he made no startling gains, his greatest being six yards—but Burton had been expecting an exhibition somewhat similar if not worse than Billings' first sorry showing. Tonight, however, Judd kept coming. The fault, as Burton saw it, was that he stopped for a moment just as he was about to hit the line; he slowed up as he went to circle the ends; he did not take the ball soon enough. But when Burton thought of the farmer boy's kicks, a glint of admiration came into his eyes. Why, even Blackwell could do no better. And Blackwell was about the best football player since the great Bob!

"Billings, the coach wants me to give you the dope on the signals and plays," Burton said to Judd, as they left the dressing room for the street. It was Judd's turn to be surprised. He felt miserable. Every second in scrimmage had been agony. He had played like one in defense of one's life and had used what to him was the utmost caution. He could not help stopping just before hitting the line; he could not keep from slowing up as he circled the ends; it took him just an instant to make himself take the ball each time his signal was called. And when it came to kicking, his only thought had been to get the ball as far away from him as possible. He loathed physical contact. No one had spoken to him outside

of Burton. Judd imagined that they all were conscious of his showing the white feather. The first team men seemed especially hostile. They had received a tongue-lashing from the coach for their inability to run the score up. Of course he could not know that they were a bit resentful at him for having thwarted their scoring attempts by his unusual kicking.

Judd made arrangements with Burton to meet him and go over the signals. As they parted, Burton asked him, "Say, why don't you get out to the field early? You don't have a last hour class. And practice kicking . . . practice drop kicking and place kicking. You've got a good toe. It might be that . . ."

A warm feeling passed through Judd. He was grateful for the interest shown in him. It helped to have someone believe that he could do something. Judd hesitated.

". . . I don't have a class the last hour either. I could go out with you. . . ."

Judd tried not to let Burton see how pleased he was at this offer. "Why . . . why, thanks, awfully!" he said, "I'd like to do it."

The game with Canton High was only one week away. Word came from Canton that their team was expected to win by a margin of twenty points. Canton was claiming the state championship. Trumbull High could not make such claims, not

having played as stiff a schedule as the rival school. But both Canton and Trumbull had gone through the season undefeated. And Trumbull followers would be glad to make claims if their team could conquer Canton. Sport writers picked Canton to win easily, with Trumbull's lineup weakened by the loss of Blackwell. Even if Blackwell could get into the game it was dubious if he would be able to do much. That sprained left ankle would not be any too strong. The game was to be played at Trumbull. Great preparations were started to take care of a monstrous crowd.

Three days before the game, Coach Little came on the field early and saw an interesting spectacle. Burton and Billings were on the gridiron. Billings was standing on the thirty-five yard line, facing the south goal posts. Ten yards in front of him knelt Burton with his hands on the ball. Billings motioned. Burton passed the ball between his legs. Billings caught it deftly and plied his toe to it as the ball struck the ground. The oval raised in a swift, short arch and sped over and between the uprights. Coach Little stood still in astonishment. The boys did not see him. Burton ran after the bounding ball. He returned. The process was repeated, Billings moving back to the forty yard line. Coach Little hastened out on the field.

"Here, what are you boys doing?"

Burton and Billings looked toward the coach in surprise.

"Practicing, sir." It was Burton who spoke.

The coach looked at Billings, who stood embarrassed and with his toe kicking at some uneven rises in the ground.

"Judd, if you could run with the ball as well as you can kick, you'd be of value to the team."

Burton wanted to tell the coach that he thought Billings was getting better. Billings had made a twenty yard run last night. And he had not seemed so afraid of getting hurt.

"I think Judd is . . ." started Burton, but thought better of it. The coach was no fool. He was probably aware of Billings' improvement.

Judd knew that he was getting better control of himself. Each little victory that he won, no matter how much anxiety it had caused, seemed to lessen the effort he had to put forth the next time. And Judd had escaped even the slightest injury. Football was not as rough as it looked and a fellow didn't get hurt every time he fell down. On top of this he was beginning to develop a fighting blood. He could sense himself creating an objective and then feel a desire to reach that objective. If it was the fourth down and they needed three to go, Judd tried to make the three yards with some to spare. He could see himself making it and before he got a chance to wonder whether

anything would happen to himself or not, he was in motion. Sometimes he reached the objective and sometimes not, but it wasn't many minutes before he found himself facing a new situation that had to be settled. And so it went, until the scrimmage was over, Judd not sensing any fear until the actual moment of contact when he was greatly disturbed until he found that nothing had happened to him.

To Judd, football was a variety of hot and cold sensations. The moment he could absolutely overcome his apprehension he knew that he would be able to hit the line hard, that he would be able to run the ends and that he would take the ball when his signal was called with the proper snap and drive.

"Billings, I am moving you up to the first squad tonight," said the coach, deciding. "This will be our last scrimmage before the big game. We may have need for your toe."

Burton could not conceal his joy. He had taken a liking to Judd . . . a peculiar friendship had sprung up between them . . . his contempt for the great Bob's brother was gone.

Hopes of Trumbull followers were heightened when Jimmy Blackwell put in his appearance for practice and limped through signals with the team, his ankle heavily bandaged and supported. Blackwell got away several kicks but they carried little

better than thirty yards. He did not take any chances in scrimmage.

The first team lined up for scrimmage with Rudolph in the fullback position. Blackwell, wrapping himself in a blanket, came over to sit down beside Billings.

"Well, Judd, I hear you've been placed on the first squad," said Blackwell. There was the trace of chuminess in his voice.

Judd nodded his head, not knowing what to say.

"Looks like we'll need you, too. I understand you've developed into quite a kicker." Blackwell was trying to draw him out.

"Oh, I don't know . . ." said Judd, hesitatingly.

Blackwell lowered his voice.

"Say . . . I've never told this to anyone and I wouldn't want you to repeat it. This is my last year in high school . . . same as it is yours. It's my third year on the football team. When I first started in I was so afraid of myself that I'd worry myself sick over things that never happened. I could never quite figure you out until that time when I tackled you. I know what it means to stick it out the way you have. But you'll come out on top if you hang on. Nothing bothers me any more . . ."

Judd could hardly believe his ears. Could it be possible that a player like Blackwell had ex-

perienced the same feelings? Judd thrilled with the thought. It was good news to hear that another person had overcome something similar to that which he was struggling to conquer.

"How . . . how long did it take you to . . . to get the best of it?" Judd asked, interestedly.

"I still have to fight it . . . at times . . ." replied Blackwell, gazing down at his bandaged ankle. "But the old feeling doesn't stay with me long. I soon get the upper hand . . . The reason I'm speaking about this to you is partly a selfish one. It's been my ambition to see Canton High defeated. For two years I've played on the losing team. This year we counted on turning the trick . . . until I was injured. Between you and me, Rudolph can't make the grade. He is fast but too small. We'll be outweighed at least ten pounds to the man. Rudolph will play for all there is in him but there isn't enough. If I get in I won't last long. You saw me out there . . . kicking. It's about all I can do to put the weight of my body on this left foot, to say nothing of booting the ball at the same time . . . I don't know whether the coach will give you a chance unless it's to make a kick. But if you could get a grip on yourself and let loose once . . . say, I'M not even trying to guess what might happen!"

Judd sat, his blood pounding in his veins, thinking of what Blackwell had told him. He was

vaguely conscious of the sound of signals being called, of cries of spectators, of the dull tread of running feet. Out on the field the loyal sons of Trumbull High were doing their utmost to get in tip top shape for the biggest battle of the season.

A sudden yell went up as Burton recovered a first team fumble and started on his way toward the goal with a clear field ahead of him. Rudolph was in pursuit.

It looked like a touchdown for the second team. But Rudolph was slowly gaining. The goal was only fifteen yards away . . . now ten . . . now five. Rudolph left his feet and his arms encircled the flying Burton. They came to earth two yards from the last line. The elated second team lined up for first down.

Blackwell nudged Billings. "There's a situation that might develop in the game with Canton," he said. "Imagine that the second team is Canton. If we hold 'em for downs I'll bet the coach calls you in to kick."

Judd bit his lips and watched. Three times the second team backfield dove into the first team line. But the first team was holding madly now. On the last down the ball was but a foot from the goal line. Fenstermaker, big guard, broke through the defense and dropped Burton for a one yard loss. The ball went over.

A halt was called in the game. Coach Little had motioned to Rudolph. Blackwell pushed Billings to his feet. "Get in there! The coach is calling you. What did I tell you? . . . Come on . . . let's see a real punt!"

Judd pulled off his sweater and ran out on the field. He knew this was to be one of his big tests. If he made good the coach might see fit to use him in the big game. But more than that—he must make good for Blackwell . . . and then there was Bob . . . and yes, even his mother! The scrimmage to the other players meant little more than a final strenuous seasoning . . . to Judd it meant a fight against unseen odds.

Barley, first team quarterback, picked out a spot about five yards behind the goal line for Judd to stand. Barley was the personification of pep. He ran along the line, slapping his players on the back and exhorting them to hold. He came back to Billings.

"All right . . . show your stuff! Kick that ball out of sight!"

Judd reached out his hands. He had a surge of fear. What if the line didn't hold? What if the pass was poor? But the next minute the ball was coming back to him. The line wavered and the pass was low. By the time he got in position to kick the players were almost upon him. He put every ounce of strength into the boot.

Forty yards down the field the ball went twisting and turning. It struck the ground and rolled to the second team's twenty yard line where a second team player fell on it. The first team was out of danger. Cheers came to Judd's ears from the few on the sidelines. He had come through under fire.

Coach Little approached Blackwell. "I believe we have unearthed a kicker who can take your place in an emergency," he said, exultantly. Blackwell was enthusiastic. "Believe? . . . Why, Mister Little, that fellow's on the way to being the best kicker Trumbull High's ever had!"

The first time that Judd was called upon to run with the ball he was tackled and thrown heavily. His wind was knocked out of him. The Coach and Blackwell looked at each other apprehensively. What effect would this have on Billings? They watched his fellow players lift him up and down while Judd gasped for air. Presently he sat up, then was shoved to his feet. His face was ghastly. Barley asked him if he was all right. Judd wasn't sure. Barley asked him if he wanted to leave the game. The other players looked on, some a bit contemptuously. Was Billings going to lay down again? Judd shook his head and stumbled back into his position.

When he was next called upon to take the ball he did not follow his interference and tried to

evade his tacklers, being thrown for a five yard loss. Barley reprimanded him severely. Judd was almost paralyzed with fear. He kept saying to himself, "No, I will not quit . . . I will not quit."

Coach Little and Blackwell looked at each other again. Disappointment was written on their faces. Billings lacked the fighting spirit . . . he could not stand hard knocks . . . it would never do to trust him with carrying the ball. The Coach likened him to a young high school lad he had known who showed promise of becoming a great baseball player. The boy could catch every ball that he could get his hands on but he was afraid to stand up to the plate . . . he couldn't get out of the habit of stepping back . . . he was fearful of getting hit . . . and the result was that he lost out all around. Billings was the same way . . . only in football.

Judd left the field that night crestfallen. Inwardly he had wanted to play the game . . . to get up and play harder than ever . . . but for some inexplainable reason he could not make himself. It seemed that he was panic stricken. His outer feelings ran away with his inner judgment. The school needed him badly but he could not qualify.

There was a letter from Bob awaiting him when he got home. He took it to his room to read it.

Bob spoke of the coming game with Canton. Then there were a few lines of kindly encouragement and advice. "I've heard from several sources about your work this fall, Judd, and it certainly has given me cause for rejoicing to learn that you have stuck with the ship regardless of what's happened. I believe it has done you lots of good. I wish I could get home to see the game with Canton but I can't figure how to manage it. We have a game Saturday and even though you play your game on Friday it would be next to impossible for me to get away. Cheer up, you're bound to get your chance one of these days. Don't forget your contract. Hang on! You've done fine so far! The football season will soon be over. And with Blackwell on the injured list there's a bare possibility you may get into the big game. Say, wouldn't that be great?"

Judd put the letter from him with a shudder. Yes, wouldn't it be great! If scrimmage was hard, what would a real game be with rivalry at high pitch and each team contesting for every inch of ground? Judd wondered how other people could feel the way they did about things. Just now it seemed to him that the opportunity to play in the big game would be about the worst calamity that could befall him. The way to live up to the contract was not to think of self but to think of the contract. It was just like thinking of the objective

CHAPTER IV

FIGHTING SPIRIT

The day of the game dawned with a miserable wet rain falling. The Canton High team and five hundred raving rooters arrived by special train at ten in the morning. Nothing seemed to dampen their spirits. They came with the intention of winning a decisive victory and having a big time in the doing.

Judd, hollow-eyed from loss of sleep through dread of the approaching conflict, met with other members of the team at eleven o'clock. Most of the boys were in good spirits. The coach had insisted that they eat at a training table and that he supervise the last meal eaten before the big game. He always got the boys in uniform early and gave them an opportunity to wear off the first wave of excitement before the game was called.

Blackwell managed to sit next to Billings. He saw that Judd was almost beside himself with nervousness, playing with his food and making a sorry pretense of eating.

"I—I'd give anything if I could get out of this . . . ."

"No you wouldn't," prompted Blackwell,

"You'd be ashamed of yourself for the rest of your life . . . and you know it."

Judd hung his head. He had to confess that what Blackwell said was true. Now that he had waged the fight against himself, there was a certain growing spirit which refused to let him stop. He had thought that he would quit on the last night of scrimmage but the next night found him out taking a light signal practice with the team. It was as if he had started an automobile and then wished to stop it only to find that it had gotten beyond his control. The situation was terrifying.

When Judd dressed for the game he took a white slip of paper from his wallet and folded it inside his head gear. Some of the players saw him do it and one asked, "What's that for, a shock absorber?" The question was a harmless thrust but Judd flushed guiltily. They certainly would kid him if they knew what it really was!

In the distance could be heard the yells of the rival schools and the blare of the school bands. Overhead, in the lulls, could be heard the monotonous drip of the rain. What a day for a football game! The gridiron was water-soaked and soggy. A person would get covered with dirt and wet to the skin. Nothing inviting about that to Judd.

"Fellows, I've been your coach for seven years. There has never been a game in all my experience that I have wanted to win more than this one. We

will be outweighed; we will be faced by a team of veterans: but we will not be outspirited. Trumbull has always possessed the spirit that never says die. I know that every man on the first team will be out there . . . when his chance comes . . . giving everything he has for old Trumbull. . . ." The coach's eyes passed over every boy in the squad, pausing just a moment to rest upon Billings, then moving on quickly.

The last pointed words of the coach failed to impress Judd. He seemed in a daze. Could it be possible that he was actually a sub on the first team and that he might be called upon to play? The thoughts of honor had not come to him . . . of fighting for his school . . . of fighting for anything in particular. But he did want to fight to live up to the contract . . . to the belief that a few people had in him.

Judd followed the other subs to a bench along the edge of the field. He sat down with Burton, second team quarterback, beside him. They watched the Trumbull eleven as it took the field amid a riotous welcoming from the umbrella packed stands. Judd studied the blue jerseyed youths of Canton in comparison with the dark red clad boys of Trumbull. It seemed to him that the Canton team was better drilled, the players moved with more snap and machine-like precision. Judd felt nervous and fidgety.

Trumbull won the toss and chose to kick off. There was a tense hum of sound as Barley, Trumbull quarterback, knelt and pointed the ball on a wet clod of dirt. Rudolph measured off the distance to kick. The opposing captains raised their arms, the referee's whistle shrilled, and the wall of red clad Trumbull warriors moved forward as the ball spun into the air.

Rudolph's kick carried to the ten yard line where Drake, Canton fullback, gathered it in and fell behind his quickly formed interference. He slipped and slid through the mud as he ran. A Trumball player, meeting the solid phalanx at the twenty yard line, plunged low into the interference, being trampled under foot. But he succeeded in breaking the formation. Fellow team-mates tore into the advancing runners and the big fullback was downed on the thirty-five yard line after a brilliant opening run. The stands were in an uproar.

Judd had watched the play, being conscious of a peculiar pulsation in his throat. The very atmosphere seemed suddenly charged with fighting spirit . . . he saw the Trumbull team . . . now transformed into mighty gladiators . . . and he experienced a shocking sensation at the thought that he was one of them . . . in reserve.

Burton pounded him on the back. "Wow!

They failed to gain!" as the first onslaught of the Canton line was repulsed for a two yard loss.

Before the game was five minutes old it was sadly evident that today—of all days—weight was very likely to tell. The wet field was bound to greatly handicap the work of both teams. There would be little opportunity for fast, open field work or much passing. The plays would have to be through the line or around the end—straight football largely.

As the first quarter drew to a close, Canton had the ball on Trumbull's thirty yard line, benefiting by a series of punt exchanges. Holding desperately to prevent Canton gaining another first down, Trumbull was slowly but surely pushed backward through the mud. With one yard to go, Drake came crashing through center for three yards, battering his way with scarcely any interference to help him.

Judd seemed to feel each impact as the opposing lines strained against each other. He cringed inwardly as he heard the smack of Drake's collision with Barley, who brought the big fellow to earth. Canton's first down on Trumbull's eighteen yard line!

The first down seemed to give the heavier Canton team new life. They went to the attack with a savageness which was not to be denied. Using the sledge-hammer power of Drake . . . the

Canton team pounded again and again at the Trumbull line. The players could scarcely be recognized for the mud with which they were bespattered.

Judd noticed Blackwell, hobbling up and down in his nervous eagerness, looking appealingly at the coach. But Coach Little shook his head. He was taking no chances by putting Blackwell in so long as there was no opportunity of his doing much good. Blackwell's value, in his present condition, would lie in his offensive ability—if he could be used at all. Judd wondered why Blackwell wanted to get into such a combat. He recoiled at the very thought that he might be called upon.

An excited cry directed Judd's attention back to the play of the moment. The Trumbull line had faltered and the Canton backfield was through with Drake again carrying the ball. Judd saw Barley brushed aside as he dove for the runner. Rudolph, the last line of defense, came dashing in and threw himself at the Canton fullback as he crossed the goal line. Drake spun around and fell heavily over the goal, landing solidly upon his tackler. A mighty cheer went up from the Canton rooters—a cheer which died out in a sudden hush when it was seen that the tackler did not rise. Trumbull players gathered about Rudolph. "Water! Water!" A boy near Judd picked up a pail and went racing out on the field, dabbing a

sponge in it as he ran. Judd stared dumbly at Burton, who said: "That's tough! . . . Looks like Rudie's out!"

They carried Rudolph from the field and Blackwell went limping out to take his place. The Canton team lined up for the try at goal. Rudolph was regaining his senses and struggling to be in action again. Judd leaned over toward him. "You're out of it, old man," he said, soothingly. Judd thought this remark would be a great relief to one who had received such a jolt as Rudolph. But Rudolph only glared at him as another cheer told plainly that Canton had kicked goal. Score seven to nothing . . . favor of Canton. Referee's whistle! First quarter up.

The teams exchanged goals and Canton kicked off to Trumbull. Barley caught the ball on his fifteen yard line and ran it back seven yards before a Canton linesman struck him down on a pretty tackle. Blackwell, taking the ball on the first play, made a limping plunge around right end for a three yard gain. He was given a resounding cheer for his gameness. Two more downs and Trumbull was forced to punt. Blackwell went back and tested his footing in the mud. He shifted his weight carefully to his left foot and booted the ball, but his kick lacked the power it ordinarily contained. The punt carried a scant thirty yards and the Canton halfback who caught it came

charging toward the Trumbull goal to Trumbull's twenty-eight yard line. Several attempts to tackle this elusive runner were thwarted by the slippery condition underfoot.

With the ball in Canton's possession again the relentless pound, pound, pound against Trumbull's line began anew. Despite heroic attempts of Trumbull linesmen to stop the advance, the heavier Canton line pushed and shoved and forced its way through, making a path for the seemingly tireless Drake who had been nicknamed "Mud Scow" by an ingenious Canton yell leader.

Eleven minutes of the second quarter were gone when "Mud Scow" Drake went over for the second touchdown. Judd had watched Trumbull for every foot of the water-soaked territory. He had seen Blackwell, on three different occasions, stop the slashing, slipping drive of Drake . . . had seen these two go down in a sea of mud . . . had seen Blackwell get up each time a little slower . . . had seen the undaunted determination upon his dirt-smeared face. And when the Canton team lined up joyously for their second try at goal after touchdown, Judd saw that Blackwell was crying . . . crying in unashamed fashion . . . perhaps he wasn't even conscious that he was crying. This was all so puzzling to Judd. He had thought of himself first in everything. He could not comprehend exactly why

Blackwell should be so concerned . . . unless he were hurt . . . and suffering! It did not dawn upon him what Blackwell was actually thinking . . . that Blackwell, in his last year at school, felt himself unable to do his best . . . sensed his inability to put the punch in the team . . . to restore its shattered confidence . . . shattered because of Canton's powerful, battering attack.

The first half ended with the ball on Trumbull's ten yard line and Canton just that far away from a third touchdown! Score, Canton 14; Trumbull 0. Drake's well trained toe had added the extra point after the second touchdown also.

"So far the game looks like a one man offensive and the advantage of weight," Coach Little told his players between halves. "Stop this fellow Drake and you'll stop their drive. They're using him because they have to depend upon straight football and he's the strongest man in their backfield. The chances are that Canton will play a defensive game from now on and you must take the offensive in order to win. You've got everything against you today but one thing . . . and that's spirit. Any team that can put up the fight you have out there every minute of the half need not be discouraged. Don't think about the score. Concentrate on every play . . . put everything you have in it . . . and the score will take care of itself . . ."

The coach sent the same lineup back into the game.

Rudolph, swathed in blankets, sat near Judd, who watched him out of the corner of his eye. He noticed that Rudolph kept his attention centered on every move of the game. Canton kicked off, and it was Trumbull's ball on Trumbull's thirty yard line. Rudolph's lips moved at each calling of the signals. Judd unconsciously got to doing the same thing. Every time Blackwell's number was called he imagined that he was Blackwell and followed the play through in his mind. Blackwell was holding up . . . he was good for short gains almost every time he took the ball. But after each run he dragged himself back into position and scraped the mud from his feet as though each sticking clod held him back.

Rudolph nudged Judd after a play in which Blackwell's fatigue was most evident. "You'll get your chance pretty soon . . . he's about all in!"

The blood went racing to Judd's head. The entire game had been thus far like a disconnected dream to him. It had been difficult to actually associate himself with it.

"My . . . my chance!" he faltered.

Rudolph nodded . . . then clutched Judd's sleeve. "See . . . Blackwell's looking this way . . . we've got to kick . . . and . . . he can't!"

The field seemed to blur out of Judd's vision. There was a sickening buzzing in his head . . . he looked at Rudolph with undisguised horror on his face.

"Me . . . me . . . go in . . . there?"

Rudolph gave him a look of scorn and threw aside his blankets. Coach Little came up, slapping Judd on the back. "You're taking Blackwell's place, Billings . . . ."

"Let me go in!" pleaded Rudolph, "Judd's scared stiff!"

The coach glanced sharply at the shivering substitute. The referee's whistle was screeching demandingly. Blackwell was being helped off the field.

"No, Rudie . . . you're done for the day. It's up to Billings."

The coach turned to Judd.

"Billings, I'm not putting you in because I want to . . . it's because I have to, understand? And if you show yellow . . . everyone in Trumbull and everyone in the state for that matter . . . is going to know it."

Judd ripped off his sweater. He passed Blackwell as he went out to report to the referee. Blackwell called to him. "I'm counting on you, Judd . . . do it for me, old boy!"

The great Bob's younger brother had a mixture of feelings . . . the words of the coach had

aroused him more than he had ever thought he could be aroused . . . and Blackwell's plea had brought to him a flash of what it really meant to forget self. If Blackwell could play as he had played with a sprained ankle when every step meant a stab of pain . . . if Rudolph had given his best and was even now, though injured, willing to get back into the battle . . . why couldn't he carry on the good fight? WHY COULDN'T HE? The question suddenly became an obsession with him. And the answer began to rise up within him . . . "I can . . . I CAN!"

The ball was on Trumbull's thirty-five yard line and last down. Barley met Billings on his way out to the team. Judd had an odd thought that Barley reminded him of a man who had stuck his head out of a sewer hole and looked at him one day. Why should he think of such a curious thing as that . . . at a time like this? But Barley was shouting something at him . . . the stands were on their feet . . . shouting . . . shouting . . . what were they shouting? . . . why! . . . it was HIS name!

"Come on, Billings! Get us out of this hole," pleaded Barley.

And when he said this . . . the haunting face of the sewer digger came back to Judd . . . came back in such a ludicrous light that Judd looked at Barley and laughed. Get him out of

the hole? Certainly he would! The other players—grim, tired, water-soaked—saw Judd laugh. His first time under fire in the biggest game of the year . . . and he could laugh!

To Barley the laugh came as a ray of sunshine. His worries vanished. Judd had the attitude of a veteran. Barley ran along the line, kicking each linesman as the referee's whistle put the ball again in play. "Get in there and hold that line!"

There was the sloppy crunching of body against body as the slippery ball snapped back to Billings. Judd caught it, juggled it, recovered and kicked. The ball arched skyward in a twisting spiral. Trumbull ends, making a quick get away, went stumbling and sliding down the field.

Drake stood under the punt, waiting to catch it. As he reached up to grab it a Trumbull end hit him, the slippery ball eluded his wet fingers and bounced a few feet away. The other end, closing in, dove for the ball. There was a wet mass of muddy forms disputing possession. The referee dug down to the bottom of the heap. Trumbull's ball on Canton's seventeen yard line!

The first real break in the game had favored Trumbull. Barley pounced upon Judd and hugged him happily. "Good boy, Judd . . . we're going to score!" The team showed new spirit. Every man was on his toes. Only seventeen yards away from a touchdown! The stands began to

come to life. "Yeah, Trumbull . . . Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!"

Signals! Judd was conscious of them . . . but he was also conscious that the signals had a direct relation to him. He knew, for instance, that the first play was going through left guard and that he was to form interference for the right half. The ball was passed back. Judd automatically crossed in front of the right half and charged toward the Canton left guard . . . but Canton had broken through . . . and he found himself confronted with two determined-looking tacklers. He slipped and half fell into them and both opponents fell with him. The right half plunged on over them, Judd feeling a foot on the scruff of his neck as his face went down in the mud. The play netted a bare yard.

Signals! It seemed that he had scarcely gained his feet before he was whirled into another play. Barley was pepping up the team . . . he was putting drive into them . . . and he was calling Billings' number!

Judd took the ball and fell in behind his interference. He circled the end, running wide. A tackler attempted to reach him but slipped and went down in the gummy mire. He stuck out his hand and another tackler dropped away from him. He was conscious of the rain on his face . . . and it seemed that for every foot he advanced

. . . he slid two feet backward. Judd now found himself running alone. He turned in as he came to a strip of white along the edge of the field, catching a fleeting glimpse of umbrellas and huddled spectators . . . then he saw the big form of Drake plowing toward him with arms outstretched.

Fear overtook Judd . . . a fear which blotted out everything else from the daze of his thoughts. But in this instance, fear saved him. Judd made a supreme effort to avoid being tackled, and leaped past Drake just as Drake left his feet. Drake struck in a shallow puddle and rolled over and Judd fell across the goal line. He had scored a touchdown the first time that he was given the ball!

As quick to reclaim him as they had been quick to condemn him, his team-mates crowded about Judd and for the first time made him feel the glow of comradeship. Only Judd knew how unworthy of their praise he was. His touchdown had been a happy accident. His attempt to kick goal was blocked. Score, Canton 14; Trumbull 6.

Two minutes remained of the third quarter. Trumbull kicked off and the ball was downed on Canton's twenty-one yard line. Canton tried the Trumbull line for two downs and found that the line had stiffened. Trumbull was holding desperately. Then Drake dropped back as if to kick.

Barley called to Billings. "Get back. Watch out for a fake punt!"

Judd had hardly gotten back when the play started. Drake was a triple threat man. He made as if to pass to the left end, then plunged through the right side of the line. Barley tackled Drake but the big fullback shook him off and started into an open field with only Billings between him and the Trumbull goal, seventy some yards away.

Judd had been living in dread of such a moment. There flashed through his mind the temptation to make a seeming effort to tackle Drake and fail. It would be easy to let on that he had slipped in the mud. And there would be no danger of his getting hurt. He saw Drake preparing to straight arm. Then Judd saw a mental picture of Blackwell with his lame ankle, running toward the selfsame Drake unflinchingly and bringing him to the ground. A sudden blast of courage came over him. He ran at Drake swiftly and knocked Drake's arm aside; his arms closed about Drake's knees; the big fullback lurched to free himself, twisted his body in an adroit manner and managed to swing Judd about so that the weight of his body landed on his tackler's head. Judd experienced the same sensation that had come to Rudolph.

Barley, the first to his side . . . spoke harshly to Drake. "Trumbull men always play

fair . . . this is the second man you've put out of the game!"

Drake laughed and denied the accusation.

A water boy came running up and dashed a pail of water on Judd's face. The Trumbull players crowded about, crestfallen. Judd came to . . . with an expression of pain on his face. He moved his left shoulder cautiously and winced as he did so. "Oh . . . take me out . . . take me out . . ." he whispered . . . "My shoulder!"

Barley picked up Billings' head gear which had been knocked off in the tackle. The stands were cheering his name. But Judd was conscious only of pain. As they helped him to his feet . . . he saw the coach on the field.

"I—I can't go on, sir," he said. "I—I'm hurt."

The coach examined Judd's shoulder. "It's just a wrench . . . you're our only hope . . . can't you stick?"

As the coach asked the question he took the head gear from Barley's hands and went to place it back on Billings' head. A piece of white paper fell out. The coach picked it up curiously. There was some writing on it.

"Here, sir! Give that to me! That's mine!" Judd's eyes flashed. It would not do for anyone to see what was written on it. If they did he would be humiliated forever.

"Please, sir!" as the coach began to unfold the

paper. "If you'll give it back to me . . . I'll stick in the game!"

Coach Little shook his head perplexedly and handed him back the paper. Judd took it shamefacedly and tucked it quickly in his cap, turning away. His team-mates stared at him in incomprehensive amazement.

"He's gone nutty!" said Barley.

The players had no sooner lined up to resume play than the whistle blew for the end of the third quarter. The ball was on Canton's thirty-nine yard line and Canton's first down. Score—Canton 14; Trumbull 6.

On the sidelines a small commotion was evident. The great Bob Billings had arrived! He'd intended to see the entire game but had missed train connections at the junction. It had been his desire, however, to keep Judd from knowing of his contemplated presence. The substitutes crowded around the former Trumbull star in eager admiration. Bob sought out Coach Little.

"Mister Little . . . my name's Bob Billings . . . how's the game going?"

"Too much beef for us in weather like this . . . the boys are putting up a great fight though!"

"How . . . how's my kid brother doing?"

Coach Little looked out upon the field. The teams were changing ends and getting in position to take up play in the last quarter.

"I can't understand him. He scored our only touchdown on a great fifteen yard sprint. Then he stopped that big bull . . . Drake . . . just as it looked like Drake had a clear field. Drake fell on Judd after the tackle and hurt him . . . He'd have quit the game then and there if it hadn't been for a piece of paper."

"A piece of paper?"

Coach Little laughed. "Yes . . . I found it in his cap and gave it back to him without reading it on his promise to stay in the game. I suppose the kid's sweet on some girl and was more afraid of being embarrassed than he was of being hurt!"

The great Bob's eyes clouded over, and his jaws tightened. "Poor Buddy!" he said, softly.

CHAPTER V

FOR A SCRAP OF PAPER

Out on the field Judd was having the biggest fight of his life. There surged up within him the desire to overcome the fears of the past. He remembered the morning that he took the pen and signed his name to the contract in Bob's room; remembered his coming back to Trumbull and reentering school; remembered how he had made himself get out for football; remembered his mother's changed feelings toward his activities. He had fought this thing that he knew was not a part of him . . . trying . . . trying to shake it off . . . but it clung to him hardest at just the times when he wanted to do the most . . . when it was the most difficult to get away from . . . and easiest to surrender.

The paper had seemed to Judd as the only outward evidence of his determination to keep up the good fight . . . to conquer fear. He did not want to admit to anyone that he had broken faith with himself . . . he had gone so far now that there must be no turning back . . . regardless of consequences. And the piece of paper did mean something to Judd. It meant living up to his true

self . . . a self which had no use for babying; a self which never recognized failure . . . a self which did not think of itself . . . first.

Judd crouched in his defensive position, a hand holding his lame shoulder, eyes on the Canton backfield. There was a sudden shift, the lines crashed and the big Drake came through again. But Judd, gritting his teeth, went forward to meet him and dropped Drake for a bare two yard gain.

"Good boy!" cried Barley, pulling Judd to his feet. "Right at 'em!"

Drake, dripping with mud and water, jogged back to his position. The quarterback said something in Drake's ear. Drake nodded and glanced at Billings derisively. The next moment he had the ball again and was circling the end.

Judd, muttering to himself, "I can! . . . I can!" cut through the muddy turf. Barley spilled the interference and once more Judd tore into Drake, bringing the big fellow down. But Drake had gained five yards.

Third down and three to go! Canton tried a line play. Trumbull held. Drake fell back to kick. Judd retreated to Trumbull's thirty yard line to play for the punt.

The pigskin came spinning through the heavy air toward him. He had run forward about five yards to get under it. He made the catch but slipped and fell as he started forward. As he got

to his feet two Canton tacklers hit him. When Judd got up he was conscious of a sharp pain in his right knee. Time out was taken while he paced about, testing his foot to the ground.

Barley, supporting him, said in a whisper: "Tough luck, old man. You're putting up a great game. They wouldn't be in it if it wasn't for their man Drake . . . we've got just seven minutes . . . I'll tell you what I'm going to do . . . I'm going to give you the ball practically every play and we'll hand them some of the same medicine they've been feeding us!"

"I—I don't believe I can do you much good," faltered Judd.

Barley grinned. "Where do you get that stuff? Anyone who can stop that bird Drake can hit the line . . . How's your knee . . . better?"

The referee's whistle sounded. Judd became conscious of the wild entreaties of the Trumbull crowd. They still had faith in their team . . . they knew the boys would do their best . . . and now was the time when Trumbull must fight the hardest.

He nodded. On the first play Barley, at quarterback position, smacked the ball against his stomach as he came pounding through. Judd hit the line; it wavered; he went through; his feet scraped against the slippery sod; bodies struck him . . . hands clutched at him . . . but he kept on go-

ing as long as he could feel earth beneath him. When he found himself back in position and got his bearings he discovered that he had made seven yards! His team-mates were exuberant. There was a wild motley of sounds from the sidelines.

Once more he felt the ball in the hollow of his arm, finding himself plunging around the end with his hand against Barley. He saw a tackler and pushed Barley into him . . . then cut in, stumbling as he did so, to avoid another muddy face which leered before him. Judd ran for ten yards before he was dragged to the ground. . . .

The game became just one run after another; it seemed like he was continually getting up from the bottom of a heap and staggering to his position, only to start forward again—reaching out for the ball—and blindly but savagely following in the direction of his interference.

There was an outer din of noise that Judd was vaguely conscious of. He could feel a jerking pain in his leg and an aching twitch in his shoulder. Occasionally, when Barley didn't call his number, he would start forward, then drop to his hands and knees and rest. Oh, how good it seemed to be out of play! He was tired . . . desperately tired . . . his whole body was sore . . . he was miserably wet and uncomfortable . . . his eye-lids were almost stuck shut with mud . . . his mouth was thick with

the grime of it . . . but he kept mumbling to himself, "I can! I can!"

Barley called time out as he fell face downward in the mud. The water boy was out on the field again. Judd blinked as a sheet of cold water struck him slosh in the face. Barley was pounding him on the back.

"Wake up, . . . we're only five yards from the goal and three minutes to go . . ."

Judd looked up and beyond Barley. He saw the dark outline of the bleak, wet goal posts, saw the tense faces of the Canton team . . . then his own fellows grouped around him.

Fenstermaker, Trumbull guard, knelt beside him. He was crying . . . the tears making odd little rivulets down his blackened face. "Come on, Judd . . . we'll make a hole for you!"

Judd struggled to his feet. They were all willing to help him. He was astounded at his own power to keep going. He didn't seem to care what happened. It didn't seem like it was he at all. He allowed them to set him on his feet. "You—you fellows make the hole," he said, "I-I'll go through!"

On the sidelines, under the very goal posts, the great Bob stood . . . his cap was in his hands . . . his hair was wet with rain . . . his feet were almost lost to view in a puddle of water . . . he was unconscious of anything but the ac-

tions of his brother. A Trumbull fan, recognizing him, pounded Bob on the back. "I guess you'll have to take a back seat now, eh Bob? The kid's got it all over you!"

If Judd could have known what his brother was thinking of him then! If he could only have known that Bob was on the sidelines! But Judd didn't know a thing except that this was his fight. He wasn't even playing for the school. He wasn't thinking of any honor. His single thought was that to have failed in what he set out to do was to fail in everything.

Bob watched Judd as he swayed upon his feet; his eyes followed him as he lunged forward and took the ball once more; he lost sight of Judd for a moment, then saw him come straining through the line with a tackler hanging to his waist.

The tackler's hand slipped off . . . Judd shook himself free . . . Bob wanted to shout, "Look out!" as he saw Drake dive for him . . . then he caught his breath as the kid dodged the fullback but slipped and fell. Drake turned and threw himself upon Judd as Judd rolled over and planted the ball over the goal line.

The name "Billings" rang from one end of the field to the other, with the substitute fullback being lifted to his feet and pummeled by his team-mates who were crazy with joy . . . but Judd was so

fatigued that his attempt at a goal after a touchdown went wide. Two minutes more to play and the score 14 to 12 in favor of Canton.

It was Trumbull's kickoff, Barley begging Judd to hurry up. Judd swung his toe against the ball and started to follow his kick dazedly. The ball, water-soaked and heavy, carried to Canton's five yard line. The best Canton could do was carry it back ten yards.

Because the game was so nearly over . . . the Canton quarterback ordered a punt. "Mud Scow" Drake, with a self-confident smile on his dirt-rimmed face, stood with his arms outstretched waiting to send the ball far down the field . . . crushing the last slight hope of victory from Trumbull. It had been a terrific game . . . and Drake was conscious of his power now as never before.

Barley, realizing that this was the most critical moment in the entire game, ran along the line exhorting the half dead linesmen to a final frenzied effort.

"Get in there, fellows, and block that kick! Block that kick!

The sidelines took up the frenzied cry.

Drake's hands closed upon the ball, he raised it shoulder high and let it drop, his muddy foot came up to meet it . . . but just at that instant a body shot against him . . . there was the hol-

low plunk of a ball striking a rather soft object and a mad scramble of flying forms.

When the referee had pulled the players apart he found Fenstermaker, Trumbull guard, lying face down upon the ball. Trumbull's ball on Canton's eleven yard line . . . and fifty seconds left to play!

Judd knew that he was not capable of carrying the ball another foot. He instinctively realized that Canton would repulse any effort that Trumbull might make at running with the ball. The time was too desperately short.

Then, in a flash, there came to him the vision of practice sessions he had held with Burton, second team quarterback. Burton knew how to handle the ball, how to place it to his liking. If Burton were only in the game. . . .

Judd spoke a few quick words to Barley and Barley . . . loyal son of Trumbull . . . called time out so that Burton could come into the game . . . and substitute for him.

Everyone knew what was going to be attempted. Burton came racing out to Judd who had picked out the spot where he was to attempt the place kick. Three points would just win if Trumbull could make them. But the field was so soggy and the footing so uncertain. Besides . . . the heavy clouds had brought dusk upon the field prematurely.

Judd removed his cap and took out the piece of white paper. He unfolded it and laid it flat upon the ground, then stepped back a few paces and Burton knelt, with hands extended, over the paper. The seconds seemed like hours.

"Hold that line!" Judd begged of the linesmen. But he need not have urged this . . . tired though they were, they could be depended upon to give their all now.

The pass from the center was a bit wide but Burton caught it deftly and upended the ball upon the white piece of paper. Judd took three short steps and bit his lips as he brought his toe squarely against the pigskin . . . a sharp pain shooting through his knee.

Blackwell and Barley hugged each other on the sidelines. Rudolph danced in glee. The ball had skimmed over and between the uprights . . . skimmed above the bar by a hair! The timekeeper's whistle sounded and Trumbull had won a miraculous uphill game by the score of 15 to 14!

And the fellow, who, singlehanded, had made the triumph possible—weary to the point of dropping— stooped and picked up the piece of paper, stuffing it back in his cap. The next instant he was carried away upon the shoulders of the madly joyous crowd to one of the wildest victory celebrations Trumbull had ever witnessed.

* * * * *

That night, refreshed by a hot shower and with his sprains carefully bandaged, Judd accompanied the great Bob to the high school campus where a huge bonfire defied the dismal patter of rain. As they stood by the fire, listening to the cheers of the student body, Bob said to Judd: "Buddy, where's that contract?"

Judd reached sheepishly inside his overcoat and pulled out a muddy piece of paper. Bob took the paper, reached over and before Judd could stop him, tossed it in the bonfire.

Silently the two of them watched the tongues of flame eat the paper up.

When the paper had become nothing but formless ashes, Bob turned to his younger brother and reached out his hand, saying in a voice that was husky with emotion: "Well, Buddy, it's gone. You don't need the contract any longer. You lived up to more than a scrap of paper this afternoon. You lived up to the best that was in you!"

And Judd, a happy lump in his throat, could not answer. But his heart sang with the knowledge that he had won more than the football game. He had won a lasting victory over himself.

"One of these days, Judd, old scout—you're going to be taking my place at Bartlett!" Bob continued, his arm about Judd's broad shoulders.

"I—I'd sure like to," Judd replied, warmly,

"Not your place exactly . . . but be making a place of my own!"

Bob grinned.

"That's the stuff!" he returned, little realizing that the following football season would bring drastic changes and see his kid brother—still quite the green, clumsy youth from the country—headed for Bartlett while he . . .?

CHAPTER VI

ILL NEWS AND A NEW ARRIVAL

"Hey, fellows! What do you know? Bob's not coming back!"

It was Jack Frey talking and his announcement brought exclamations of surprise and concern from the group of Bartlett men crossing the campus.

"What?"

"You're kidding!"

"If he's not coming back—good-bye football team!"

"Say, can't you guys tell when Cateye's joking?" reprimanded Benz Hoffmaster, last year member of Bartlett's backfield, "Of course Bob's coming back. He's captain-elect!"

Cateye shook his head soberly, taking a letter from his inner pocket.

"I wish I was only kidding," he said, as fellow students gathered around, "But this is straight dope. The man running the Billings farm is sick and Bob's decided to stay home a year to help his mother take care of things . . ."

An involuntary groan went up. Bob had been Cateye's room-mate. The two of them were also

veteran members of the team, Cateye at left guard and Bob at fullback. Beyond having been the most popular fellow in school, Bob had been acknowledged the greatest player in Bartlett history. His absence would be felt off the field and on.

"But we can't let Bob stick out there on the farm!" protested Benz, "We need him too much here. Read the letter, Cateye. Let's get the details."

Cateye unfolded the letter obligingly.

" 'Dear Pal,' " he read, " 'I've put off writing this as long as I could, hoping that somehow things would work out so I wouldn't have to write at all. But, Jack, there's no use trying to kid myself, as much as I'd like to be back with you this year, I'm just not going to be able to make it. You see Mr. Duncan's been mighty sick for the past couple months and the doctor says he'll have to take it easy for at least half a year and that means only one thing—I've got to stick here and help mother run the place.' "

"Gee, that's tough!" muttered Curns, veteran right end.

" 'But I'm sending someone in my place,' " continued Cateye, still reading, " 'My kid brother, Judd—who, I think, is a natural born football player. He's worked on our farm the past four years when he hasn't been going to school and,

since Bartlett doesn't bar Freshmen from her varsity, I'm hoping he shows up well enough to make the team. He's big and strong but awkward and somewhat backward. You can do a lot for him, Cateye, if you will. He's never been any further than the little old home town, except the summer he visited me in the city, and the trip to Bartlett seems like a coast to coast journey to him. But he'll get this taken out of him the first few days there and you'll really find him a corking, dependable fellow when you get to know him. I've tried to teach him a few things about football as it's played in college but he still has lots to learn. He starred, though, in the big game with Trumbull High last season. And, Cateye, if you'd like to do me a favor . . . I almost hesitate to suggest this . . . but if you could see your way clear to taking Judd in as your room-mate . . . well, I'd never get over appreciating it. Tell the gang how sorry I am not to be coming back. Looks like, even without me, this year's prospects for a winning team, are very bright. Go to it! And don't stop till you've cleaned up on Pennington. Your old sidekick—Bob. . .' "

Fellow students consulted one another with glum glances. No doubt now about Bob's not returning. Suppose they'd have to make the best of it. But what do you suppose the kid brother whom he was sending was like?

"So Bob wants you to room with a farm hand!" joshed Benz, "Well, that's what I'd call a test of true friendship. Just what are you going to do about it?"

Cateye nodded. "Why not? Bob was a farm hand at that rate—when he first came on here. His brother, Judd, can't be so bad and if there's a chance of his developing into good football material . . ."

"You said it!"

"Bob ought to know good football material when he sees it."

Cateye grinned. "There's a postscript I didn't read you," he added, "About Judd's arriving at two-five this afternoon . . ."

"Hey, that's only half an hour from now!"

"I know it, and I've an errand I've got to do first," said Cateye, "But let me give you the rest of this postscript before I beat it. Bob goes on to give his brother a boost by saying: 'Judd's in great physical trim already. You should see him tackle three hundred pound hogs out here on the farm and throw 'em . . .'"

A howl at this.

"Better keep out of his way, Benz!" warned Curns, "You don't weigh that much but how you eat . . .!"

Benz made a move in Curns' direction, Curns retreating.

"Let me finish!" pleaded Cateye, "I'm in a big hurry, guys."

"Shoot!"

"Sure! Go ahead!"

"'. . . and, with Coach Phillips to instruct him on kicking, just watch Judd boot that old pigskin'." concluded Cateye. "How's that for a real send-off?"

Benz whistled, "Looks to me," he laughed, "Like Bob's trying to insure his brother getting a great reception by doing a rave about him. He's got my curiosity aroused at that. I'd like to look the boy over. What do you say, fellows, we all meet Judd at the train?"

The suggestion was made impulsively and received just as impulsive a seconding.

"Good idea!"

"Give Judd a grand welcoming for Bob!"

"Make him feel at home!"

"All right," agreed Cateye, "Meet you at the train then." And he was off about his business.

The afternoon train, packed with merry students returning to Bartlett after a long summer's vacation, puffed slowly and with apparent weariness up the slight grade and came to a stop not more than a block from the college. Although Bartlett was some three miles from anything which resembled a town it happened to be located near a railroad and the company, on special occasions,

had conferred a favor upon the students by stopping at the college, thus saving numerous transportation bills.

As the train pulled in, some fifteen or twenty students, led by Benz Hoffmaster, pushed to the front of the platform and peered eagerly through the passing windows, hoping to catch sight of the youth pictured in Bob's letter. Cleeve, as yet, had not put in an appearance. He would have been of no help as to identification, however, for none in Bartlett had ever seen this expected new arrival. But it was likely that Judd, in some manner, would betray his identity.

Returning students, piling from the coaches, were swallowed up by awaiting friends and roommates who swarmed about them, amid much back-slapping and handshaking. Everyone was glad to see everyone else back. The confusion was such that the group on the look-out for a strange face and a someone to whom the surroundings were obviously new, about reached the conclusion that one Judd Billings had escaped their notice.

"Or maybe he got so homesick he jumped off the train and's walking back to the farm," suggested Benz.

At this instant attention was drawn to the last occupant of the last coach who stumbled awkwardly off the car platform and looked dazedly about.

"There he is!" went up the shout.

Big-boned, apparently well-muscled, and of solid build, the new arrival presented a picture of strength but handled himself so clumsily as to provoke the curious interest of any passerby. In each hand he gripped a bulging suitcase.

"Hey, Judd!" called Benz, and started in his direction, followed by the group.

Startled at the sound of his name, the new arrival looked toward the charging reception committee. He drew back uncertainly as Benz dashed up, holding out his hand.

"You're Judd Billings, aren't you?"

The new arrival nodded, eyeing the fellows surrounding him with growing suspicion and uneasiness.

"Welcome to our college!" called Curns.

This brought a blaze of greetings.

"How's Bob?"

"Let's take your grips!"

"Cateye'll be here in a minute!"

"Tackled any hogs lately?"

"Here! Here! You fellahs lay off! I can handle these bags myself!" The new arrival jerked at his suitcases to pull them free from hands which reached for them. "Let go or I'll . . .!"

"But, Judd . . .!" protested Benz, surprised, "We only mean to . . .!"

"None of your tricks now!" warned the fellow Bob had sent, "I've heard of you college guys. You're not going to haze me. I'm looking for Mr. Jack Frey . . ."

"We're all friends of his!" insisted Benz, "Here, let me introduce us. Reading, left to right, is Potts, Curns, Pole, Neil . . . Hold on, Judd! Where you going?"

Evidencing no interest in meeting the bunch, the new arrival had been anxiously searching the station platform for signs of anyone who might be looking for him. He now moved toward the small waiting room which served as an excuse for a depot as this junction stop was not often used by the railroad.

"Listen, Judd!" Benz blocked the way. "You're not going to pull that high hat stuff around here. We've come to meet you out of respect for Bob and we . . ."

"You let me through!" demanded the new arrival, prodding Benz with his suitcases.

"And what if I don't?" Benz wanted to know, "You haven't been around much, have you? 'Bout time you were learning a few things!"

"You gonna let me through or not?"

There was fire in the new arrival's eye. He wasn't in the mood to be kidded. This stepping off the train into a college atmosphere and being met by a bunch of hoodlums who wanted to slap

him on the back and take his grips away from him and rush him off with a lot of "hurrahs" didn't set well. Judd Billings was homesick for one thing; he'd been warned to have nothing to do with strangers, for another; and his natural backwardness in meeting people only added to his quite unaccountable attitude of reserve and resistance. Jack Frey was the one person Judd was prepared to meet. If later Jack should vouch for these fellows, all well and good. Until then he intended to keep them at arm's length.

"See here, Judd!" spoke up Potts, "You're acting like a rube!"

"I'll say he is!" seconded Benz, "Try to befriend him and . . ."

Giving Benz his shoulder, the new arrival, with a sudden, unexpected shove sent Bartlett's veteran football man sprawling.

"Oh ho!" cried Pole, "So the party's getting rough!"

Regaining his feet, Benz approached Judd angrily.

"Put down those suitcases!" he demanded, "I want to take a crack at you."

The new arrival attempted to edge out of the group surrounding him.

"Leave me be," he said, "I don't want to be hurting anybody!"

This brought a chorus of defiant laughter.

"I dare you to put those suitcases down!" challenged Benz.

Judd hesitated, looking about him warily. The train had gone on and most of the passengers had departed with their friends. In the distance a figure was advancing on the run.

"I tell you fellahs, I . . ."

"So you're afraid, eh?"

The new arrival stiffened at this, his fingers twitched, and he fastened upon Benz a coldly penetrating look. Judd's fear of physical contact was no more. The suitcases dropped to the cinder platform and hands went to hips.

"I reckon I can't stop you, if you're hankering for a fight," came the words with a drawl.

Somehow this clumsy broad-shouldered figure took on an appearance of power as he seemed to forget himself, which bred respect.

"Go easy, Benz!" warned Neil, sizing Judd up, "No use starting trouble."

"I'm not starting it," retorted Benz, "I'm finishing it."

With that the ringleader of the ill-treated reception committee swung a vicious right hook to the new arrival's jaw. Judd's left arm flashed up to block the blow. At the same moment Judd took a quick step forward and brought his right fist into play. It caught Benz almost on the point of the chin and spun him about in a circle.

"Say, the rube can fight!" exclaimed Potts, surprised. "Boy, he's sure different from his brother!"

"Here, fellows! What's the big idea?"

The figure of Cateye hurled itself between as Benz, reeling, staggered back toward Judd, bent on retaliating.

"Let me at him!" pleaded Benz, furiously, "I'll show him he can't get away with this stuff. So Bob sent him, eh? What a lemon!"

Cateye sized up the situation quickly.

"My name's Frey," he explained to Judd who was standing by quietly, hands again on hips, "Bob asked me to meet you, I'm sorry to be late. What seems to be the matter?"

"These fellahs wouldn't let me alone, that's all," said Judd, simply.

"We come to meet him and he gives us the cold shoulder," declared Curns, "Afraid we're going to make off with his precious suitcases or smash his straw hat or throw dust in his eyes!"

"We college guys are bad eggs and no mistake!" put in Neil, sarcastically.

"My mother told me not to have anything to do with strange people," added Pole.

"Will you please tell Mr. Billings, for his own enlightenment, that he's among civilized people?" requested Potts, icily.

"These fellows are all right," Cateye assured,

as Judd gazed about him doubtfully, "They didn't mean anything. They're all good friends of Bob's. They just wanted to show you a good time. You probably took them too seriously. Come on, Judd, we'll take your things to my room."

Relieved, the new arrival stooped and picked up his suitcases. His face wore a sheepish look but he offered no apology for his conduct. Rather he seemed anxious to get away from the bunch

"A—am I goin' to bunk with you?" he asked of Cateye.

"Bunk?" repeated Cateye, "Oh, sure! You're going to be my room-mate."

"Heaven forbid!" said someone.

"Take him away," urged Benz, "We don't want anything more to do with him."

And without another word being spoken Cateye set off with Judd, the new arrival stalking along, carrying the two bulging suitcases easily, scorning Cateye's offer of aid.

"That guy's cooked his goose at Bartlett!" declared Benz, feelingly, "And from now on, guys, he's just a plain rube to me!"

"Rube's the right word!" agreed Pole.

"That's what we'll call him after this!" decided Curns, "Rube!"

And so, one Judd Billings, sent to Bartlett by his highly esteemed brother Bob, stepped off into a new world, for him, on the wrong foot.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST NIGHT

"But, Judd," argued Cateye, weakly, "I never sleep with my window wide open like that. Especially this time of year. Why there is frost on the ground in the morning and the room will be cold as ice when we wake up!"

"Well, I can't see any harm in good ventilation. I slept in the barn most all this summer an' I don't look sick, do I?" said Judd, for the third time.

Cateye looked him over. No, to be sure, Judd didn't look very sick. In fact he seemed exceedingly robust. One hundred and ninety-six pounds, most of it worked into well formed and almost abnormal muscles.

"I can't say that you do look sick," admitted Cateye, "That's just why you can stand it. But I, —I'm not used to such outdoor measures. Do you want to turn this room into a park?"

"Not eggs-actly a park, but I believe in lots of fresh air an', . . ."

"Have it your own way then!" growled Cateye, savagely, seeing the uselessness of further argument.

He ventured no more remarks but watched Judd's every action curiously, musing: "I can't see Bob's idea in wishing this bird on me—even if he is his own brother—but I've taken him in now and I'll stick it out to the end."

Meanwhile Judd had removed a wallet from his pocket and was in the act of secreting it between mattress and springs.

"I say, Judd, what's the idea of hiding your wad? Nobody will steal it. There aren't any thieves about here!"

Cateye, already in bed, raised himself upon his elbow and eyed his new room-mate interestedly.

"You never can tell, Mister Frey. I had my dinner swiped this noon an' I'm not takin' any chances!"

"For heaven's sake, Judd, call me Cateye. Everybody else does."

"Well, I reckon I can," replied Judd, slowly, having completed the action of hiding his wallet to his evident satisfaction.

"Those feet and those hands," sighed Cateye to himself, "would make Babe Ruth turn green with envy!"

Judd struggled awkwardly into a home-made nightshirt.

Cateye buried his head in a pillow and bit his lip to keep from laughing outright. "Ye Gods! And is this only the beginning?" he asked himself.

CHAPTER VIII

JUDD PRACTICES FOOTBALL

Although Bartlett was one of the smaller colleges of the state, it was also one of the most popular. Proud alumni pointed to the fact that more men, afterwards become great, had graduated from Bartlett than any other college of its size in the world. Besides, Bartlett had gained a wide reputation and much respect from the larger universities and colleges because of her ability to turn out winning athletic teams. True, Bartlett had never as yet succeeded in downing the State University or defeating many of the bigger colleges, but she had always given a good account of herself. Fond hopes were held out by students as well as alumni that, in the near future, Bartlett would clearly demonstrate her superiority in some branch of athletics over the best teams in that part of the country.

The nearest Bartlett ever came to any real prominence was early in the history of the institution. That year, the newly founded college turned out a wonderful football team, challenging and defeating Pennington, claimants of the State Championship, by a 17 to 6 score. After

this truly unexpected victory Bartlett asked and received a game with the State University, but this eleven soundly trounced them, 28 to 7, and all aspirations for State honors fled.

However, the defeat of Pennington, which was the second largest institution of learning in the state, put Bartlett forever in the select class. The defeat also gave Bartlett a bitter rival. The drubbing at the hands of the smaller college had been a hard pill for the Penningtonites to swallow and in after years they sought to wipe out the blot upon their former record.

Spurred on by their previous success Bartlett always provided stiff opposition against Pennington and much interest as well as excitement was manifested over contests between the two colleges although at the present time, Pennington seemed to have had the best of the argument. To venture a statement that Pennington did hold the upper hand, however, while speaking to a Bartlett student, would be the means of placing your life in extreme jeopardy.

The college campus at Bartlett was uniquely laid out in the form of a great wagon wheel. From the hub of this wheel, cement sidewalks, acting figuratively as spokes, led the way to the outer rim which consisted of a wide, circular walk passing entirely about the edge of the grounds. All of the college buildings were grouped about

this large circle so that they were readily accessible from any point on the campus. One needed only to select the spoke leading up to the building he wished to visit and a few minutes walk would take him there. Great elm trees, whose foliage and limbs so beautifully shaded the well kept grounds, made the campus a place to be admired by students and visitors alike.

The next morning, after his eventful night, Cateye was hurrying to chapel when someone hailed him from behind.

"I say, Cateye! Wait a minute, will you?"

It was Pole's voice and Cateye turned about questioningly.

"Well, what is it?"

"Do you mind telling me what that noise was I heard in your room last night? You know my room is right next to yours, . . ."

"Noise! What noise?" queried Cateye, forgetting himself for the moment.

"That's *just* it! *What* noise? It sounded like the distant rumbling of thunder. In fact it was so realistic that I got up and shut my window to keep the rain from beating in before I tumbled to the fact that the manufactured product was coming from your room!"

"Oh!" laughed Cateye, a light beginning to dawn, "That's only Judd; he snores."

"Snores! Great guns, he booms! Why, I'd

have sworn the walls shook last night. And say, —does he do anything else?"

"Talks some," admitted Cateye, reluctantly.

"Indeed!" scoffed Pole, making a beautiful pair of arches with his eyebrows. "I'll say he talks some! In fact if he talks some more to-night,—well, tell him to BEWARE,—that's all!"

"You can hardly blame a man for making some disturbance who plows a three acre field in one night," grinned Cateye.

"Is that what he did?"

"Yes,—in his sleep."

"How do you stand it?"

"I don't stand it; I put up with it."

"Surely you don't intend to keep that rube as a room-mate! Why, that'll make you the laughing stock of the college. The idea of rooming with a guy that plows fields in his sleep. Deucedly funny. Bah!"

"He struck rocks, too!"

"When? Where?"

"Plowing that field of his."

"Well, I hope he strikes a boulder to-night and breaks his plow so he can't work any more. Either you get rid of that guy or I'll change my room!"

"Go ahead,—change your room!" Cateye looked at Pole defiantly.

"I will, if that nut starts to thunder again to-night!"

Pole departed with a vicious stride, giving one the resemblance of a man on stilts.

Cateye stood watching him, an amused smile on his face.

Three weeks passed quickly. During this time Judd underwent a trying period. Wherever he chanced to go he provoked laughter and was made the object of many petty but harmless jokes. There was no doubt about it, Judd was slow, but he was also good natured and when he saw the joke, enjoyed it as much as anyone. Largely through Cateye's untiring efforts his rough edge was gradually being worn away, and, while he had formed few friends, still he had made no real enemies. Most of the fellows took him as a huge joke.

Cateye had written to Bob: "Judd is a great scout and getting on fine. He certainly has the build for a great football player. I've been giving him pointers and I'm anxious for practice to begin so I can see how good he really is."

After the first night Judd talked only during waking hours, a fact which greatly astonished Cateye. True, Judd still snored some, but he could easily be forgiven for this minor offense so long as he did not take a notion to plow any more fields. Moreover Cateye had succeeded in breaking Judd in to soft, downy beds and in making him strive to do things much as other fellows would.

Two weeks later as Cateye was crossing the campus he was met by Benz who slapped him joyfully on the back.

"Football practice begins to-morrow! Since Bob did not come back this year the eleven will have to meet and elect a new captain."

"That's so," recalled Cateye, "Be great to get back in harness again, eh, Benz?"

"You bet! Say,—d'you suppose Rube'll be out to-morrow?"

"I don't know."

"I hope he is. That fellow is the richest joke that ever hit Bartlett college. Why, if he doesn't know any more about football than he does about table manners, . . ."

"See here, Benz!" retorted Cateye, impatiently, "haven't you had about enough fun at Judd's expense? Seems to me three weeks has been time enough to wear the joke off some. He's a peculiar fellow, I'll admit, but a great scout once you know him."

"Well then,—I don't know him yet, that's all," retorted Benz.

"Better come over some time and get acquainted!" Cateye spun on his heel and walked off, leaving Benz puzzled and indignant.

Two weeks more whiled away with nothing eventful happening. Football training had gotten well under way. Benz had been elected cap-

tain of the eleven over Cateye by one vote. Both men had won their letters for two years and were looked upon with respect and admiration by the other members of the team. Judd had turned out for practice but his ever present awkwardness had caused no end of merriment and made him the brunt for criticism from the mouth of Coach Phillips, himself. "Mighty good material," the coach had said, "But, he certainly needs seasoning!"

The first night that scrimmage was held, Judd, who had been playing left tackle on the second team in practice now got his first chance to demonstrate his ability. Benz was playing fullback on the varsity. Students thronged the sidelines.

The varsity kicked off and held the seconds for downs on their thirty yard line. The first play called for a line smash through left tackle. Benz came tearing in; his interference crumpled; he felt a hard shoulder against his knees, and the next moment hit the ground with a terrible thud which knocked the wind completely out of him. When he came to he looked around quietly, felt of himself, and sat up. "Steam roller or locomotive?" he asked, gamely.

"Only Rube," laughed Curns, who was playing right end on the varsity.

"Hump! He did it on purpose just to show me up. I'll get him!"

"No he didn't!" denied Cateye, indignantly, who happened to hear Benz's threat. "Judd says he didn't mean to throw you so hard. He always tackles that way. He stops whatever comes through his side the line."

"I guess he does!" grunted Benz, jumping dazedly to his feet. "Well, he won't get me again. Come on, gang, let's have a touchdown!"

Despite their efforts the varsity could not cross the line and the ball went over to the scrubs on the twenty yard line.

"Can any one in this gang punt?" asked McCabe, the quarterback. "We've only got one real punter in this college an' that's Benz."

"I used to be able to kick some," volunteered Judd, to McCabe's amazement.

"Play ball!" growled the varsity, anxious for more scrimmage.

"Good! I'll drop into your position. You go behind the line and receive the ball. We haven't any handsome array of signals yet. Give that pigskin fits!"

"I'll try!" grinned Judd, trotting back.

The students along the sidelines wondered at this latest move of Judd's. They had opened their eyes wide at the way he broke up the interference and nabbed Benz for a loss, a few plays before. Was he going to bring more renown to himself by disclosing some real toe work?

The ball was snapped back. Judd caught it clumsily but seemed over-anxious. The pigskin dropped and his mighty leg swung up to make the punt, but in some unaccountable manner, ball and foot missed connections and Judd described a graceful semi-circle, alighting flat on his back. It was so funny that the players on both sides refused to play. They just fell in their tracks and howled. Judd crawled slowly to his feet, his face crimson, his jaws set tight. The field was ringing with laughter. Even immobile as he usually was, Coach Phillips could not refrain from smiling. Luckily a scrub recovered the ball, but eight yards had been lost on the play.

"Call that play again!" Judd demanded, somewhat angrily.

"What! You're not going to repeat that performance, are you?" taunted Benz, elated at Judd's poor showing.

"Better let me kick it this time," suggested McCabe, "I think I can punt a little farther than that!"

"So can I!" insisted Judd. "Give me another chance!"

There was something in Judd's eyes which made McCabe consent.

Everyone knew that the same play was to be attempted. Benz set himself ready to break through the line the moment the ball was snapped

back. Here was his chance to break up the play and make Judd look more ridiculous than ever. The revenge would be sweet. Back went the ball! Benz shot through the line like a thunderbolt; Judd was raising his arms, his foot was swinging up. Benz leaped desperately into the air to block the punt. There was a firm, hollow sound of pigskin meeting toe and Benz felt the leather whiz past his face. Far down the field, even yet high in the air, soared the ball, twisting and turning! A gasp of amazement came from the crowd, then cheers.

"A good fifty yard punt!" cried several. "He *can* punt after all, can't he?"

"The lucky stiff!" groaned Benz.

CHAPTER IX

AT THE FAIR

It was the first of October, and Saturday. The day before the varsity had played its first football game of the season, trouncing Needham, 48 to 0. The work of Benz at fullback, who was endeavoring to fill the famous Bob's position, was a feature of the game. Time after time he tore off long runs through the left side of the line and mainly because there was no man like Judd on the opposing team to stop him. Cateye's work at left guard had made that side of the line as solid as a stone wall. Judd sat quietly by the sidelines, notebook in hand, jotting down different pointers on the game as they occurred to him. He was eager to learn, so eager! But would he ever know enough about the game to make the first team?

To-day, Saturday, marked a day of rest for the eleven. Coach Phillips never allowed his men to work out the day after a game. Accordingly the fellows looked about for some new form of recreation.

"I'll tell you, fellows!" suggested Benz, struck by a new idea, "This is the last day of the fair at Tarlton. Let's all attend in a bunch!"

The suggestion met with unanimous approval. Saturday was the only day that the students were allowed to visit town without a special permit.

"Great stuff! Let's start!" shouted Curns.

"All right, we'll meet on the campus at ten this morning and hoof it to town."

"Oh, I say, Benz! Have a heart! I left my walking stick at home."

"Come on, glove stretcher, don't be a quitter," pleaded Benz, "I've another idea! Let's ask Rube to go along. We'll have no end of fun. He's a regular side show by himself!"

"With the menagerie thrown in!" sniffed Pole.

"What d'ya say?" persisted Benz, "Shall we invite him?'

"Yea!"

"All right, then. Ten o'clock, fellows!"

Ten o'clock found all of the bunch collected except Pole, Judd and Cateye. Everyone was anxious to start.

"Why don't those nuts hurry up?" growled Potts, stamping about, restlessly.

"Here they come, Pole and Rube! I wonder where Cateye is? Say, we sure will have some fun with Rube if he isn't around. He always takes Rube's part!" cried Benz, joyfully.

"Cateye couldn't come. Too much work to do!" shouted Pole, when in hearing distance. "But I brought Rube."

"Good enough! Come on, bunch. Let's beat it into town now. It's only three miles and we can make it before noon!"

The party started off at a rapid gait. Judd swung along easily, despite his weight, taking the lead. Not much was said until half the distance had been traversed. About this time there began to be stragglers who could not keep the pace that Judd was unconsciously setting.

The fellows exchanged winks. Such a joke to be outwalked by a rube! Benz passed the word along: "For heaven's sake, guys, keep up to Rube's pace if it takes all the pep you've got! If this news ever gets back to college, . . ."

But the faster gait of the fellows only spurred Judd to shake forth another reef, so that without knowing it he was rapidly tiring the bunch.

"And I thought I was in condition!" panted Benz.

"My legs are long, but,—" began Pole, then shook his head helplessly. "Oh, what's the use!"

"Only another mile, guys!" called Benz, cheerfully, glancing slyly at Judd. "Some exercise, eh Rube?"

"You're right! One ought to do this every day. I'm kind of out of practice now, but I reckon I'll be in form coming back!"

"Great express trains! Did you hear that?" whispered Curns, wiping perspiration from his

forehead. "I'll be hanged if I try to keep the pace of this rube goin' back! I never was cut out for a long distance runner!"

"I'm on my last legs," groaned Potts, to Benz. "I know it's only half a mile more but this pace is too hot. I'll have to drop out. Tell the folks at home I died a brave death."

"You sprained your ankle," hinted Benz, himself eager for a chance to rest.

"So I did!" cried Potts, happily grasping at any strategic ruse which might stop the line of march. "Oh, my ankle! Fellows, help! I've turned my ankle! Wow! No, not my left one, my right! Oh, my! Oh, my!"

"What a pitiful accident!" sympathized Benz, soberly, removing Potts' shoe and rubbing the ankle roughly. At the same time he winked slyly at the bunch.

Momentarily checked, the fellows threw themselves flat upon their backs and inhaled long, deep breaths of the refreshing air. All, save Judd. He strode about in circles, anxious to be off again.

"I'd give a dime to get these kinks out of my legs," he muttered, slowly.

"I'll raise you five on my ankle, Rube," groaned Potts in fake agony.

A half hour of delicious rest elapsed before Benz, as medicine man, declared his patient, Potts, able to stand upon his pins again and under-

take the treacherous journey townward. During this time every member of the party had sufficiently recovered his sea legs to trust themselves to a half mile jaunt. Judd, restless and extremely desirous of completing the trip, redoubled his speed.

Potts kept up well for the first hundred yards, then began to hobble painfully. "My ankle, Rube!" he moaned. "Have some consideration!"

"Pardon me, I'd plumb forgotten that you bruised your shin!" Judd slowed up. Fifteen minutes later an exhausted looking party dragged themselves into Tarlton.

"Stranger, can you direct me the shortest way to a free lunch?" asked Pole, hailing a passer-by.

"And a free bed?" added Potts.

"Walker's lunch room next block down," informed the stranger, gruffly.

"That's just the place for us! Get the name? W-a-l-k-e-r's lunch. Zowie! Lead me to it!" cried Oole, a big, good-natured Hollander, who played left tackle on the varsity. "Jus' give me a chance to feed my face! Yah!"

After the fellows had partaken of a good meal they felt revived enough to attend any fair, and inspired by Walker's lunch they walked another half mile to the fair grounds.

Everything was going full blast when they arrived. Merry-go-rounds, ferris wheels, confetti

stands, lemonade and taffy booths, were all reaping their harvests. Even the fat man was entertaining large audiences. The fellows had a thoroughly good time and took in almost every sight on the grounds. Judd had been kidded and made fun of until he was followed about by a troop of youngsters who thought he was a clown employed by the fair people. Judd was really embarrassed and noticeably awkward.

At four o'clock the bunch were about to leave when Pole chanced to sight a tent before which a big crowd had collected.

"What's over there, fellows? We haven't been in that tent yet. Let's see what's up!"

Curiosity ruled the day and the bunch trooped over in front of the tent.

"Hump! Nothin' but a horse show!" scoffed Curns, disgustedly, "I'm goin', fellows."

"Hold on, what's he saying?" cried Benz, calling attention to the man on the platform.

The bunch grew attentive.

"Ladies an' gentlemen. Las' but not least we 'ave with us Dynamite, the stubbornest donkey 'at ever lived! No human bein' has ever been able to stick on Dynamite's back fer more than three minutes. To any man who kin ride Dynamite fer ten minutes wid out gittin' thrown, this here management offers the fab'lous sum o' twenty-five dollars! Twenty-five dollars,—tink of it! Jes'

fer ridin' Dynamite. 'At's all. Seems easy, don't it? Las' performance Dynamite only throwed three men an' one of 'em had a rib busted. Remember, this management is not responsible fer no injuries or deaths resultin' from ridin' Dynamite. If any man here wants ter tackle Dynamite he comes at his own risk. The show begins in five minutes. Think it over, gents. Here's an easy twenty-five bucks if you want it. But remember,—Dynamite, ain't ever been ridden!"

"By the great hornspoons!" whispered Benz in Pole's ear. "Here's the chance of our lives to have a circus with Judd. Let's get the rube to tackle Dynamite. Of course he'll get thrown but think of the fun of seein' it!"

"But he might get killed or injured!" faltered Pole.

"Nonsense! A man as physically fit as Rube isn't going to get busted up by falling off a donkey. Come on, let's get him to try out Dynamite!"

Pole finally consented. "Say, Rube," he said, "You can ride Dynamite! Why don't you go in an' try it? That'd be the easiest twenty-five bucks you ever earned!"

"I was just thinkin' of that myself," replied Judd, hesitatingly.

"Here, . . . I'll lend you a quarter," returned Pole, growing generous. "I'd like to see you get the money, Rube."

"Yes, we're all with you, Rube," put in Benz, and winked at the bunch.

"Do you fellows think I could stick to Dynamite?" asked Judd, cautiously. "I've ridden everythin' from hogs to bulls but I don't know about this here donkey bizness."

"Try it anyhow, Rube. We'll come in and cheer for you."

"Sure, Rube, go to it!"

"Well, . . . all right. I reckon it won't do any harm to try."

"Good!" Pole edged his way over to the ticket seller. "This here fellow wants to tackle Dynamite!"

"What! That guy? Why, Dynamite'll break every bone in his body, son. Your friend is crazy!"

"He's no piece of china, Mister!" shot back Pole. "Look him over. I'll bet Rube can ride Dynamite!" turning and winking at the bunch. Judd stood by, quietly, soberly.

"I'll have to speak to the manager about this," replied the ticket seller, seeing that Pole was in earnest. "Hey, George, come here a minute! This kid wants to tackle Dynamite!" He pointed a long, slim finger at Judd.

"What! Say, boy, do you know what you're goin' up against? We didn't name that donkey Dynamite fer nothin'!"

"Just the same I'd like to tackle him, sir," spoke up Judd. "I'm willin' to take all risks!"

"You heard that, gentlemen? You're my witnesses!" replied the manager, for the benefit of the crowd. "He says he's willin' to take all risks. Are you ready fer the funeral, kid?"

"Yes," replied Judd, calling the bluff. "And where are you goin' to bury your donkey?"

The manager laughed gruffly. "Come on in an' I'll introduce you to Dynamite. Remember, twenty-five plunks are yours if you stick on Dynamite fer ten minutes. And here's the money!" He reached down inside his pocket and pulled forth a roll of bills. "I'll give the money to this policeman fer you to claim if you stick to Dynamite. If you do it'll be the first time in history, . . . but it can't be did, kid! 'At's all!"

The bunch filed into the tent. Judd removed his coat, disclosing a checkered shirt and a pair of suspenders. He then took off his shoes, seeming unconscious of the interested crowd about him and the titter of laughter which went the rounds. The manager stepped into the big ring, leading Judd after him. "Ladies an' gentlemen, meet Mister Judd Billings. He's a freshman in Bartlett college. An' it's the earnest wish of this management 'at he'll be able to continue his studies there after his little affair with Dynamite. Henry, bring in the mule!"

Everyone craned their necks toward the side entrance. Suddenly, with a loud, "Hee Haw!" Dynamite shot into the ring, an attendant frantically pulling at the halter. The crowd cheered.

Judd eyed the animal carefully. Dynamite was large and, from his pawing and snorting, very excitable.

Pole shut his eyes and grasped the railing that surrounded the ring, fearing the consequences.

"Poor Rube," he said.

"Poor Rube nothin'!" scoffed Benz, "Watch the fun!"

Judd's face reddened. It came over him, in a flash, that the fellows had pulled "a put up job" on him and that he was being made sport of in front of the crowd.

"If Judd Billings rides this animal successfully, this management cheerfully gives him twenty-five dollars," reminded the manager. "But he must stick to Dynamite's back for ten minutes. Everyone get your watches out. Now Judd! Now Dynamite, blow him up!"

The manager left the ring hurriedly. The attendant gave Judd the halter and also fled. Judd moved slowly, precisely, cautiously. While Dynamite hee-hawed stubbornly and tried to pull away, Judd jerked the halter fiercely, pulled the mule toward him, stepped up, grasped a long ear firmly, and swung up onto Dynamite's back. The crowd

gasped and consulted their watches. The fight was on!

The moment that Judd touched Dynamite's back was a signal for the explosives to let loose. The mule bounded into the air and came down stiff-legged. But Judd had curled his legs tightly about the body and buried his toes in its flanks. His powerful hands each gripped a long ear which he twisted and squeezed at his pleasure. Dynamite bellowed with rage and shot about the ring, kicking, biting, rearing; but unable to throw off the rider.

"Great work, Rube!" shouted Benz, unable to conceal his admiration. "That-a-boy! Stick to him. One minute's gone all ready. Only nine more!"

As mule and Judd passed by the railing where the fellows were excited onlookers, a mighty cheer went up. Judd's face wore an expression of set determination.

Dynamite was not used to being held by the ears. He could not stick his head between his legs and roll over as he had been accustomed to. He tried until he was almost frantic to free his head, but Judd's grip was vice-like.

Five minutes crawled slowly past and still Judd kept his seat, despite a series of bucks, plunges, side-steps, rearings, and sudden balks.

The manager clutched his watch nervously.

No man had ever remained seated that long before and twenty-five dollars would eat into the night's profit.

"He can't last another five minutes," the manager told himself. "Throw yourself, Dynamite! Throw yourself!"

As if obeying orders Dynamite reared up and fell sideways.

"Look out, Rube!" shrieked the crowd.

"Gad!" cried Pole, "Look at that, will you?"

Judd had struck the ground with Dynamite but remained on top and when Dynamite struggled to his feet Judd was still on his back.

"Nine minutes gone!" somebody yelled, "Stick to it, Rube! You've got the money, kid!"

Dynamite was raving wild now. No man had ever remained seated after a tumble like that! With a final snort of rage he dashed about the ring, jumping high in the air, bucking, twisting, turning. It was no use. Judd could not be shaken off.

"Time!" roared the crowd, hoarsely.

The attendant rushed out to rescue Dynamite.

"Never mind, Mister," smiled Judd, perspiration trickling down his face. "Dynamite won't explode any more. He's meek as a lamb an' all in!"

True, Dynamite might just as well have been christened Talcum Powder now, for all the fight

there was in him. The poor donkey had no further ambitions to unseat other riders and was perfectly content to let Judd perch on his back.

"Son, you're all right!" congratulated the manager, holding out his hand. "I'm a game loser. I'm not only out twenty-five dollars but my Dynamite is all gone. A baby could ride that mule now! Officer, pay this *man* the money. He earned it all right!"

CHAPTER X

AN ATTEMPTED HOLD-UP

It was exactly six-thirty and the fellows were just finishing a good supper at Walker's lunch counter. Judd had become a hero in the eyes of everyone now, except Benz. He could not allow himself to think of Judd being other than just a plain country rube and although mightily astonished at Judd's showing he passed it off finally with: "The lucky stiff!"

Pole was speaking. "Rube, seeing you've got so much kale now you might pay back that quarter I loaned you, with interest."

"Yes, an' don't forget that dollar an' a half you owe me," chimed in Oole, with his mouth full of Boston baked beans.

"I don't owe you a cent an' never did!"

"He's only kiddin', Rube," soothed Curns, "Just so you remember me in your will, I'll be satisfied."

Judd grinned; then his face grew sober. "Well, fellahs, I reckon we'd better be gettin' home. It's a long walk an' it's gettin' dark. Besides, I got quite a bit o' money an' I don't want to take any chances o' losin' it."

"That's right! I move we do go home," grunted Oole, then sweetly to the waiter, "Another plate of beans, please."

"Behold, gentlemen, the human storehouse!" derided Pole, pointing at Oole.

"That's enough from you, macaroni!" retorted Oole, tearing a biscuit in two, savagely.

"Did you say Marconi? Gentlemen, I am honored!" began Pole, then placed a hand over his eye. "Thanks for the biscuit Oole, but please pass them next time. Such table manners!"

Benz had been quiet for some time. He was a little indignant to think of the renown Judd was getting. Why, all the fellows were beginning to pay attention to him now. And he, a rube! Benz's one desire was to do something which might make Judd the laughing stock of the college; something which would provoke ridicule whenever referred to.

"I've got it!" he whispered. "Judd's afraid of robbers. Why, I heard that he hides his wallet under the mattress or carpet every night before he goes to bed. Why not pull a fake hold-up and scare him stiff on the way home to-night? Great! I'll put the fellows wise."

Benz got busy and soon everyone knew the plot but the unsuspecting Judd. Some fellows objected strenuously, but finally consented when they considered what a rich joke it really would be.

"Pole, it's up to you to get Rube started for college. The rest of us fellows will make some excuses and hang around town until you two are gone. I'll get a revolver and some masks and with the bunch will take a short cut through Perry field and meet you near the mill pond. Get busy!" Benz was insistent.

"I tell you, I hate to do this thing," Pole hesitated, "Seems to me we've pestered Rube about enough. He proved to us that he's the real stuff this afternoon and I'm for leaving him alone."

"But think of the sport, Pole. Think of it! Can you picture him begging for mercy when I point that gun at him and say, 'Hands up!' Can you?"

" I guess almost anyone would beg for mercy in a situation like that," replied Pole, not easily moved.

"Oh, come on, just this once," pleaded Benz.

". . . All right, it's not my funeral," yielded Pole, finally. "But you'd better not go too far."

"Bosh! Rube's slow as mud. He'll never tumble to the fact it's not a real robbery and we won't put him wise to the joke until we get back to college."

"All right, as I said before, it's not my funeral," muttered Pole, indifferently. Then to Judd who was standing some few feet off: "I say, Rube, let's you and I be piking it for the college. The rest of

the bunch are goin' to hang around a bit and I'm anxious to get back."

"Suits me! So long, fellows—see you later!" Pole and Judd started off.

"Now, gang!" cried Benz, "Wait here for me. I'll be back with the stuff and we'll take the short cut. Gee, it's dark out, . . . and no moon!"

* * * * *

"This night sure is a dark one. I can hardly see the road, can you, Rube?" It was Pole speaking and he was almost feeling his way along.

"Easy. I can't see the road but I reckon I can feel it," responded Judd, walking along quite briskly. "Keep right behind me, Pole, an' . . ."

"Hands up!" The voice came from the left side of the road and Judd jumped to the right.

"Don't run or I'll fire!" It was a severe warning. Judd stood perfectly still. The masked highwayman approached stealthily.

"W-what do you want?" Judd's voice trembled slightly.

"We were in the crowd this afternoon; saw you pocket the twenty-five. Hand it over!"

"We! You?" Judd looked about nervously.

"Yes, there's more of us. Come on an' show yourselves, pals!"

Sure enough! Three masked bandits came into view and stepped up threateningly. Judd started to lower his hands.

"Up they go!" mumbled the ringleader, brandishing his revolver fiercely. "Are you goin' to come across,—or do we take it from you?"

Pole stood back some three paces watching the proceedings quietly.

"Pole, what shall I do?" asked Judd, despairingly. "Help me!"

"I'm covered, Rube," replied Pole, helplessly. "Looks as if you'd have to dish up."

Judd hesitated. Finally, "It's in my vest pocket."

"That's the boy!" came a muffled voice. "Best way to do an' no blood shed. Jack, you get the coin an' I'll keep him covered. You other two guys watch that friend of his!"

Benz was the ringleader; the man referred to as Jack was Curns; the other two men were Potts and Oole.

As Curns approached to take the money he pulled the mask well down over his eyes and nose so that he could not be recognized. All went well until he placed his hand in Judd's vest pocket. Then Curns sensed trouble. He started to withdraw and step back but Judd was too quick for him. Like a flash his fist shot out and caught Curns on the point of the jaw, knocking him unconscious.

Benz was standing just two feet behind Curns. Judd reached him in one bound, struck the unloaded revolver from his hand, and crashed a bony

fist into his face. Benz went down without a cry.

Judd swung about for the other two. Potts and Oole were standing not far apart, supposedly guarding Pole. Judd had acted so quickly that they were not yet prepared to protect themselves, or to put Judd wise to the intended joke. Potts tried to escape but he did not move fast enough. He was dropped where he had stood by a stinging blow behind the ear. Judd wheeled swiftly, ready for the final victim.

"Rube!" Pole found his voice. "For John's sake, let up. It's all a joke!"

Judd had already grabbed the huge Oole and was shaking him as one would a baby.

"A fine joke, I call it. Tryin' to rob a fellah!"

Oole gasped for breath. "Let go! You're killing me!"

"It's Oole, Rube, let loose!" Pole grabbed Judd by the arm and tugged at him frantically.

The rest of the fellows who had been silent onlookers now rushed out as they saw the comedy transformed into a near tragedy.

Of a sudden the truth of the whole affair came over Judd. He released his hold on Oole and sank down by the road side exhausted. Oole also sat down, rubbing his throat gingerly.

"Fellahs, you shouldn't have done this!" moaned Judd, "that's goin' too far!"

A flash light was unearthed and the three

fellows examined. Curns showed signs of returning consciousness, but the other two were still dead to the world.

"The mill pond!" someone suggested, and the three injured members were carried to its bank. Judd, quite overcome with grief and surprise followed in company with Pole.

"Why didn't you tell me, Pole?" demanded Judd. "If these fellahs are bad hurt . . . !"

"It was all my fault, Rube! Don't take it so much to heart," pleaded Pole, "The fellows are comin' along all right. Just plain knockouts, everyone of 'em."

The appliance of water aided greatly in restoring the three bruised and battered highwaymen to their right senses.

Benz, when he came to, found only one eye ready for use. The other was swollen shut and one side of his nose felt like a small mountain. Potts groaned over a small lump behind his ear and Curns nursed a tender spot on his jaw.

"Gee!" said Potts, "You did that fast, Rube. Biff, bang, smash! and it was all over. I heard the biff and the bang but I *felt* the smash!"

"No more highway robberies for mine," groaned Curns.

Benz was too sore and disgusted to say a word. His latest plan had been a magnificent failure and Judd was more of a hero than ever.

"Did I say that fellow was slow?" said Benz to himself, "Well,—I take that much back. He's fast as greased lightning!"

"I'm sorry, fellahs," apologized Judd, brokenly. "I thought you were the real stuff; I hated to part with the money an',—an'—"

Here was an opening for Benz. He could not go back to college without some sort of an alibi.

"You thought it was the real stuff? Bah! Pole put you wise and you went in to do us all up. That's what you did, you big stiff!"

"I never said a word to Rube!" cried Pole, hotly. "The joke's on you if there is any and you know it! Don't put the blame on anyone else!"

"Well,—let's hush this affair up, fellows. I'd hate to have it get around college. Don't say a word about it, will you, Judd?"

"Hush this up? Nothin' doin'!" broke in Curns. "This joke is too good to keep. Gee, I won't be able to chew any food with this jaw of mine for a week! Good-night, gentlemen, it's getting late. Going home, Rube?"

CHAPTER XI

BENZ BROODS

News travels fast. Chapel Sunday morning was conspicuous by the absence of Potts and Benz. But Curns was present with a smiling face and piece of court plaster attached to his chin. He attracted crowds of students as a magnet attracts iron filings. The students clung to him until they heard the last word of the episodes of one Judd Billings and then, bent almost double with laughter, they rushed off to tell the news to someone else. Information was freely and cheerfully given. By Sunday noon everyone in college, even the professors, had learned of the exploit. Students cheered whenever Judd put in appearance and questioned him as to Dynamite or how to administer a knockout punch. To all inquiries Judd turned a deaf ear and his simple modesty was much in evidence.

Judd, of course, told Cateye everything and Cateye was quick to resent Benz's attempts at practical jokes.

"I wish I had gone along, now," said Cateye. "All this trouble might have been averted. Judd, until Benz makes up with you you'd better stick

pretty close to me for there's no telling what he may do to get even. He's a mighty good fellow to his friends but when he doesn't take a liking to anyone that person had better watch out."

"I reckon I can take care of myself," Judd replied, firmly.

"I know you can!" assured Cateye, "You don't need any body guard, but my motto is, 'Keep out of trouble,' and that's why I want you to stick by me close. Savvy? Come on, let's go down to dinner."

As the two boys entered the dining room everyone at the tables arose as if by pre-arrangement, while Curns yelled: "Now fellows, let her go! Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Rube, Rube, Rube!"

Much good natured laughter followed and Judd took his seat awkwardly, face flushed with embarrassment.

"Do you know my sister Norah?" some student shouted.

"No, I don't, but Dyna-mite!" another replied.

More laughter followed.

Suddenly there was a second commotion. Every head turned toward the door. Benz was entering.

"Behold, the conquered hero comes!" noised Curns.

All eating stopped. Benz hesitated at the threshold, glowering defiantly up and down the

tables. One eye was still badly swollen and colored a glossy black. His nose looked sadly mis-shapen. In all he presented a glorious spectacle.

"Oh you shiner!" cried some student from a far corner of the room.

This exclamation was too much. A roar of laughter went up as Benz stood hands twitching in anger and humiliation.

"Laugh, you guys, laugh!" he cried hoarsely.

"Don't worry, we will!" somebody assured him.

Benz stood the gaff a moment longer, then turned about, and leaving the fellows in an uproar, strode off to his room where he remained the rest of the day.

Two weeks more slipped quickly by, during which time the Bartlett eleven captured two more victories, one over Everett and the other over Lawton Academy, by top heavy scores. Both of these schools were supposed to have fairly strong teams and the results of their games with Bartlett came as quite a surprise in football circles. Students began to herald the present team as the greatest in the college's history, and talked of Thanksgiving day when the big game of the year was to be played against the rival college, Pennington.

Benz had held aloof from Judd, not even speaking to him when meeting face to face. Fellows

still smiled when passing Benz and Benz resented those smiles. "I'll get even with Rube some how!" he thought, angrily, "He's just a rube. The lucky stiff!"

Meanwhile Cateye had written another letter to Bob describing in full Judd's escapades, and adding: "He's fast developing into some football man, Bob. You should see him punt! And tackle! Say, I never saw him miss a man yet,—he's that sure! The bigger they are the harder they fall. Judd's good enough for the varsity right now and I'm expecting Coach Phillips to give him a chance any night. Of course Benz is captain and he'll put up an awful fuss if anything like that happens. Judd, in my opinion, could make good any where you put him on that eleven to-day. He's that much better than any of us. But then, this is his first year and he is green yet, I'll admit. Wish you could come down for the big game. Your side-kick . . . Cateye."

The campus clock had just struck nine one evening late in October when some one pounded on Cateye's door.

"Let 'em in, Judd," said Cateye, "before they break the door down!"

Judd was quick to respond. The door swung open. Pole and Potts stepped in.

"Welcome to our city," greeted Cateye, tossing aside a notebook upon which he had been work-

ing, "I'm always glad to entertain callers, for then I feel that I have a legitimate excuse to quit studying. What have you got there, Pole?"

"A new guitar. Isn't she a beaut? Dad sent it to me for a birthday present!" Pole sat down on the bed, struck a few chords, and started a tune. "This place hasn't been stirred by any real music this year and I decided to cut loose to-night!"

"Good heavens, Pole, why should you wish any of your discord on us? Why not rehearse in your own room?"

"I wanted an audience," replied Pole, "Isn't this ditty pretty? I composed it myself."

Potts, at this juncture, drew forth a jews harp and added further discordant vibrations to the atmosphere.

"I can beat you both!" grinned Judd, and diving for his suitcase he unearthed a mouth organ. In another moment he was reproducing the familiar strains of, "And When I Die."

The effect was almost instantaneous. Doors swung open on the halls; students on the lower floors started coming up stairs; everything was in commotion.

"Now you've done it!" reprimanded Cateye. "We'll have the whole dorm on us in two minutes! Pole, ring off on that guitar!"

Shouts were already coming from outside.

"Have a heart!"

"What d'ya think this is, a music hall?"

"That guy with the mouth organ is a coward. No one would dare make a noise like that in public!"

"Let us in before we rip the panels out!"

"Shall we let 'em in?" Pole asked, grinning.

"I suppose we'll have to," Cateye muttered, "Or suffer the consequences."

Pole slipped the bolt and the fellows packed the room.

"Just as I surmised!" cried Oole, the first man in. "Pole and Potts, the inseparable noise makers! As a penalty I demand a duet!"

"You bet! A duet!" voiced the rest.

"What'll it be?" Pole queried, with an important air, "I can play anything you should choose to name, gentlemen."

"Let's hear you render, The Last Rose of Summer."

"In how many pieces do you wish it rendered?" asked Potts sweetly, striking the key on his jews harp.

"Makes no difference,—just so it's rendered."

Pole and Potts now assumed a serious air, eyed each other soberly, and prepared to play.

"One, two, three! One, two, three! One, two, three! Play!" cried Pole, waving his arms wildly. Potts started in but missed the key by at least three notes. Pole gave Potts a handicap, then

started in to catch up. The discord was very displeasing.

"Kill it!"

"That's the last rose of summer that I want to hear!"

"Enough!"

Potts was forced to stop through laughing, but Pole kept on until strong hands compelled him to cease.

"It's a pity you fellows can't appreciate real music," pouted Pole, "I'm severely wounded. I shall never play for you again."

"Thank heaven!" breathed someone, evidently much relieved.

"Who was that we heard tooting the mouth organ?" demanded Johnson, editor of the Bartlett College Weekly.

"Rube's the guilty man," betrayed Pole, anxious to have another share his sorrows. "If they ask you to play, Rube, don't do it! I wouldn't play before such an unappreciative audience."

"Come on, Rube, give us some music!"

"No, I reckon I've made noise enough for one evening," replied Judd, shyly.

"Just one tune, please!"

Judd looked at Cateye questioningly.

"Go ahead," grinned Cateye, "Drive 'em out, Judd!"

Judd picked up the mouth organ.

"What'll I play?"

"Oh,—anything!"

"That's pretty broad. S'posin' I impersonate a steam calliope in a circus?"

"Impersonate, Judd! Great snakes, don't try to impersonate one of those things! The distortion would be so stupendous that you'd never look the same again!"

"I reckon I'll imitate one, then," responded Judd, raising the mouth organ to his lips.

The moment he started playing, a hush came over the bunch. The imitation was so perfect that every fellow could imagine again the tail end of a gaudy circus parade and the steaming calliope.

When Judd finished he was greeted with a round of applause. Cries of, "More! More!" came from every throat.

Judd seemed to catch the spirit of it all and to forget his embarrassment. He began to play simple home melodies and popular songs which gripped at the heart strings of every fellow present. Several times the fellows started in and sang while Judd furnished the accompaniments. At last, Judd, thinking that he had played long enough, struck up the tune, "Good-night, ladies." The fellows took the hint and departed, promising to come again and thanking Judd for his entertainment.

"Well, Judd," said Cateye, quietly, "I'm proud

of you tonight. You made some hit with the bunch!"

"Did I?"

"I should say you did! I'd give anything to have the guys rave over me like they did over you and your playing."

"Honest?"

"Sure thing! How did you ever learn to play the mouth organ so well? I never imagined that instrument could produce such pretty music!"

"I can't remember when I learned. Seems as if I always knew how," replied Judd, mightily pleased.

"Your popularity is assured now!" went on Cateye, "You'll have a crowd in here every night."

"Not much!" sniffed Judd, "I'm no orchestra. They'll be lucky if they hear another note for a week!"

"Well, let's go to bed," yawned Cateye, sleepily, breaking off conversation. "I don't know when I've been so tired. For heaven's sake don't snore to-night! I want to snooze."

"Trust me, pal," grinned Judd, "I'm not due to snore for two nights yet. You must remember, I'm runnin' on a fixed schedule."

Long after Judd's steady breathing could be heard Cateye lay awake, thinking. He had tried to go to sleep at first but found sleep, for a time at least, impossible.

"Good old Judd," Cateye mused to himself, "I'm getting so I like you better every day. You may be awkward; you may be a rube as they say; but you're a great scout just the same. Bob, . . . " (Here he addressed his friend as though he were present), "That was the best thing you ever did when you sent your green kid brother down to me. You knew how I could help him if I would and you knew what an inspiration he would be to me. This is a great old world and a great old college. What would life be without real friendship? What would one do without,—" but musing, he dropped off into the land of dreams.

* * * * *

The campus clock had tolled twelve very methodically and stopped for an hour's rest. Cateye was still sleeping soundly but for some unaccountable reason he was bothered with bad dreams. It seemed now as if Judd had turned into a raving maniac, had grasped him by the throat and was slowly, cruelly, choking him to death. Try as he might Cateye could not shake that death grip off. Judd was grinning crazily and saying: "That's one of my failin's; I always do grip too hard!" Cateye's breath began to come in short, quick gasps. He tried his best to cry out, to beg Judd to release him, but though his lips moved no sound came forth. Cateye tried to get free. but failed, and lost consciousness altogether.

Judd was also troubled in his sleep but his dreams were of a different nature. It seemed to him as if all the flies in the Universe were buzzing and crawling about on his face. They crept into his eyes and mouth and even ventured up his nose. The more Judd fought to keep them off the more numerous they became. Finally one big fly succeeded in gaining entrance to Judd's mouth and buzzed down into his throat, almost choking him. He coughed and sat bolt upright. It was hard for him to think, to act, to breathe. Why! The room was full of smoke! This discovery brought Judd to full consciousness with a jolt. He bounded to his feet and rushed over to Cateye's bed.

"Cateye! Cateye! Wake up! The dorm's on fire! Quick!"

No answer.

"Cateye!"

The smoke was stifling. There was no time to waste. Judd reached over and shook Cateye roughly. This not producing the desired affect he pulled Cateye out of bed and dragged him to the door, shouting, "Fire!" as loud as he could. From the lower floor his cries were answered and a voice here and there took up the cry.

Judd opened the door into the hall but was met by such a blast of hot, suffocating smoke that he quickly shut it again. What was to be done? Cat-

eye was unconscious; the hallway was black with smoke. The window! Judd rushed over to it and looked down. But the dorm was three stories high and they were upon the third story! Judd was baffled for a moment, then, diving under his bed he pulled forth a coil of knotted rope, one end of which was tied to a ring in the floor, provided for fellows in every room, in case of just such an emergency. He quickly made a noose of the free end, passed this around under Cateye's arm pits, and pushing him out the window, lowered him to the ground.

Half-clad figures were already dashing across the campus. At Judd's lusty hail some one took care of Cateye. Satisfied that his room-mate was now free from danger Judd turned about to see what else he could do. The smoke was steadily growing thicker.

He grabbed a towel, saturated it by thrusting it in a pitcher of water on the dresser, and wrapped it about his face; then he turned and rushed into the hall. At the further end, near the stairs, a little line of red flame sputtered. Judd started back, remembering the coil of hose at the other end of the hall, and wondering why none of the students had thought to use it before. But he stumbled across a body lying in the doorway of the room adjoining Cateye's. He stooped and rolled the body over so that he could see the face.

"Pole!" he gasped. Stepping over Pole's inert form and into the room, Judd saw Potts lying in a sitting posture, half-dressed, against the side of his bed!

Yells came from the floor below. "Go out the window, guys! We can't reach you from below! What's the matter up there? Get a move on!"

Judd secured the rope from under Potts' bed, made another noose and let Potts gently out the window. He looked out on the campus. A great crowd of students had now collected and more were coming from every direction. Some had lanterns.

"Tie one of those lanterns on and send it up!" shouted Judd, hoarsely.

"Where are all the fellows? There's only four accounted for! Ten more up there!" inquired an anxious voice from below.

"Don't know!" responded Judd, pulling up the rope and taking off the lantern. "I'm lettin' 'em down as soon as I find 'em!"

Pole's long, lean form was the next one to slip gracefully over the window sill to safety.

Then Judd rushed into the hall, lantern in hand. The line of fire had increased into a blaze. Two doors down, Reynolds, a sophomore, dashed into the hall, clad in pajamas.

"Help!" he cried, wild-eyed. "Max is asleep! I can't waken him. Hurry, somebody, quick!"

"Make a noose of your rope an' let him out the window!" directed Judd, "then join me!"

Reynolds disappeared within his room.

Judd hurried to the end of the hall, uncoiled the hose, and turned on the water. At first a feeble stream came forth, but the flow of water steadily increased until it gushed out.

Another student, almost choked with smoke, darted into the hall.

"This is a fright!" he cried, on seeing Judd. "Ned is suffocated and I'm almost done for!"

At this moment, Reynolds, having disposed of his room-mate, dashed across the hall.

"Here, I'll help you!" he called. "We'll go to every room and clear the fellows out!"

"That's the way to do it!" shouted Judd, encouragingly. "I'll stay here an' fight this fire!"

Dragging the hose down the hall, wetting everything before him as he went, Judd soon neared the source of the fire. It seemed to be centered about the head of the stairs. The first room on the right at the top of the stairs had been used as a store-room. Its door was almost burnt away and inside it was a mass of flames.

A voice called up from the second floor.

"Thank God, somebody had brains enough to use the hose at last! We're keeping the fire from breaking through but the building is full of smoke. Where is the blaze, in the store-room?"

"Yep!" replied Judd, his eyes smarting from the films of smoke and flying cinders.

"Everybody out up there?"

"Gettin' 'em out!" Judd did not feel like talking much.

"Good! Keep the water on that blaze and we'll have the fire out in about twenty minutes. More smoke than anything else!"

Reynolds and McCabe, the fellow he had helped, came running up to Judd.

"They're all out!" cried McCabe. "Some job, though—most everyone suffocated. I never had such hard work getting awake in all my life!"

"Fetch the lantern," ordered Judd, pushing ahead into the store-room, having extinguished the fire about the head of the stairs.

The forceful stream of water soon produced a telling effect on the flames. There was a loud hissing noise and white clouds of steam. Then the last tongue of flame slowly died out and all was darkness, save for the light shed by the lantern.

"Hurrah, we're heroes!" grinned McCabe.

The smoke was still treacherously thick. Neither Judd nor Reynolds saw any humor in McCabe's exclamation at that moment. Judd continued to pour water into the charred room. Some students at the second floor landing ventured up cautiously.

"Smudge over?" asked one.

"Mostly!" replied Judd.

"That sure was a bad one for so little a fire. Four of the nine fellows who were suffocated haven't come to yet!"

"How's Cateye?" demanded Judd.

"He's one of 'em!" was the reply.

"Here,—somebody, take this hose! Quick! I'm a goin' down stairs," cried Judd, "This smoke's too much for me! . . . Say, fellows, —where is Cateye now?"

"They took him to dorm number two!"

Judd waited only long enough to pull a pair of trousers on over his nightshirt, and to push his big feet into a pair of slippers. He forced his way through eager crowds of questioners and elbowed many fellows from his path.

The four unconscious men were laid out upon cots, drawn up in the reading room. Doctor Bray, college physician, and several students, were busy working over them. A great crowd stood in front of the dormitory, not allowed to enter.

Judd fought his way through the crowd and stepped in at the door, his face black from smoke and the upper portion of his nightshirt drenched. Oole halted him.

"You can't go in there!"

Cries of, "Hold him!" "What do you think you are?" "Keep him out!" came from the crowd.

"Cateye,—he's my room-mate!" said Judd,

simply, and pushed Oole aside as though he were a mere toy. Oole, remembering how narrowly he escaped fate at the powerful hands of Judd once before, offered no resistance.

"Come on! You let him in. Let us in!" some student shouted.

"Sure! He's no better than any of us!"

"Shut up, you guys!" bellowed Oole. "Cateye's in there and he's Rube's room-mate! Guess he has a right to go in."

"I should say he has!" echoed Reynolds, coming up. "That guy put out the fire and saved some lives besides!"

"What! Rube put out the fire?"

"Sure he did! There were only five of us on the third floor who weren't suffocated. That was the nastiest, thickest smoke I ever got into! Benz and Mann both woke up and went out the window after yelling fire."

"Benz and Mann! The yellow,—" began somebody, but stopped short when he saw the two fellows standing shamefacedly in the crowd.

"Rube let down Cateye, Potts, and Pole, and then got out the hose," went on Reynolds, the crowd listening eagerly. "About this time I woke up and when I got the first whiff of smoke I lost my head. Rube saw me, told me what to do, and McCabe and I lowered all the other fellows while Rube fought the fire. Some of the guys were half

awake but so stupid that they didn't know what they were doing so we hoisted them out the window anyhow. Thanks to Rube the dorm is saved and I guess the fellows will be none the worse for their experiences."

"Bravo!"

"Good work, all of you!"

"Rube is some boy!"

Benz turned about and walked away. "Rube again!" he muttered, angrily. "The lucky stiff!"

* * * * *

Cateye came to with a start, looked about and saw Judd.

"For the love of mud, Judd, never choke me like that again. Why,—you almost killed me!"

"Choke you, Cateye? I never choked you!" protested Judd, "You were in a fire, pal, an' the only thing I did was to shove you out the window."

"Fire! Where? When?" Cateye sat up, then laid back again, weakly.

"About three quarters of an hour ago. A little smudge at the dorm. You were suffocated,—"

"So you didn't choke me after all," said Cateye, much relieved, feeling of his throat. "My, that was an awful dream! Gee! I smell like a piece of smoked ham! Say, who are those guys?" indicating the fellows on the other cots, over whom Doctor Bray was still working.

"Pole, Potts, and Lawton," replied the doctor,

"Your room and theirs was the nearest to the fire and you got the direct benefit of the smoke. "They're beginning to come around though. Lucky some of you weren't killed!"

"Judd, you must have saved my life!" breathed Cateye.

"He undoubtedly did!" replied Doctor Bray, "Another five minutes would have ended you four fellows!"

Cateye held out his hand, gratefully. Judd took it, grinning sheepishly.

"Good old scout!" said Cateye, softly. "Be careful, . . . that grip of yours . . .!"

CHAPTER XII

ONE KIND OF LOYALTY

Two good carpenters employed for two whole days soon righted the damage done by the blaze. Pole, when he was able to navigate again and had viewed the interior of the badly charred storeroom, declared, "Looks to me like matches and mice!" This seemed to be the concensus of opinion among the fellows as to the origin of the fire. The room had been filled with spare pieces of furniture, some of which were packed in excelsior. There was also a great quantity of extra bedding in the room. This accounted for the dense smoke which almost proved fatal to a number of fellows.

Judd was now quite an object of interest, and lauded wherever he went, as a hero. He, however, disliked publicity and oftentimes, when out walking, would make many detours to avoid encountering fellows whom he knew would lavish compliments upon him. Pole and Potts became steadfast friends of Judd's since that eventful night. But the gulf between Judd and Benz had noticeably widened. Judd was fast gaining such recognition on the second team as a star that it seemed probable he might be shifted to the varsity any day.

Cateye had earnestly hoped that his room-mate might be given a chance. Just one chance! But it seemed as if that chance would never come.

One night, it was now almost November, Cateye was just returning to the locker room after football practice, when he came up to Coach Phillips and Benz on the way.

Something that Benz was saying caused Cateye to almost stop in his tracks. His pace slackened. He lagged behind within hearing distance.

"Yes, I know Judd is pretty fair,—but I'd still sort of hate to trust him in a game. Of course, if you think he's better than Walker, why,—"

"Well,—Walker hasn't shown up exceptionally good lately and I'm thinking of making a shift soon," replied the coach.

"Walker has complained of being sick this week," bluffed Benz, lamely. "He'll be o. k. in a couple of days. Don't worry."

Cateye increased his steps and hastened past.

"Benz!" cried Cateye, to himself, "You whiner! The only way you could get even with a man was to stab him in the back! I really thought you were loyal to your college,—to the team."

The following Saturday, November fifth, Bartlett College met and defeated the Wynham Medical School, 13 to 6, thus keeping up their unbroken string of victories. But the victory was a dear one. Cateye, at left guard, suffered a badly

wrenched knee, and Pole, at right end, nursed a sprained ankle. These men would be out of the game for at least a week. Judd, who had come to admire the brilliant work of Cateye, both on offense and defense, felt very bad over his injury.

"You never miss the water till the well runs dry," Judd told Cateye, the night after the game. "They'll appreciate what a darn good guard you've been now, when they try to find some one to fill your shoes!"

"Bosh! There's plenty of fellows just as good as I am, Judd, and better!" laughed Cateye, punching Judd with a crutch. "There's a guy by the name of Mister Billings, for instance, who,—"

"Do you suppose I'll git a chance now?" demanded Judd.

"Can't help but get a chance! They've got to put you in. No one else good enough!"

"Would they be putting me in your position?"

"Most likely."

"I won't do it!"

"Won't do what?"

"I won't play your position!"

"Nonsense, Judd. You'll play wherever Coach Phillips puts you."

"Maybe I will, but then, maybe I won't!"

"Why not?"

"I don't want your position. I'll quit football first. That settles it!"

"Judd, don't talk that way. It's for the team. Don't mind me. I'm out of it. I want you to show people how good you really are. I'd like to write and tell Bob,—"

"Nothin' doin'! If they try to put Judd Billings in your position he'll hand in his resignation."

* * * * *

Cateye was right. Coach Phillips was forced to give Judd a chance. The next practice had not gone five minutes before Phillips called to Judd. "Billings, come over here. I want you to fill in at left guard on the varsity."

"I'm sorry, sir, but can't you put me in some other position?"

"I'm afraid that is impossible, Billings. Tell me, what is your reason for not wishing to play left guard?"

Judd was silent.

Coach Phillips saw a strange light in the boy's eyes. He stepped over, laid a friendly hand on Judd's rugged shoulder.

"Well?"

". . . It's like this," Judd began, softly, "That's Cateye's position. He,—he's the best friend I've got. The fellows think I'm just a rube, but I—I appreciate a pal like Cateye. I . . . I'd give my life for him any day,—but take his position,—well —I just can't sir!"

Coach Phillips was deeply touched. Here was

loyalty in a deeper sense than he had ever seen it before. If Judd could only be taught the same sense of loyalty toward his college! Judd shifted his feet, restlessly; he was slightly embarrassed. He had planned to quit abruptly if asked to take Cateye's place and the fact that he had confessed to the coach his reason for not wanting the position made Judd a trifle indignant. For at least a full minute neither one spoke.

Coach Phillips dropped his hand from Judd's shoulder.

"All right," he said, "I'll not try to force you. Go back to the seconds. Play left tackle."

"Thank you, sir," replied Judd, brightening up. "If you ever want me to play another position," . . . he added, trying to make amends.

"Don't worry, Rube. We're bound to use you before the season's out," reassured Phillips, as he turned away. "Conklin!" calling to another man on the second team, "Get in at left guard on the varsity. Yes, I'm speaking to you! Snappy now!"

The energy that Judd put into his work that afternoon spread joy among the members of the second team and darkened the hopes of the ambitious varsity. Largely through his untiring efforts the second team pushed over a touchdown, starting from mid-field, in exactly seven minutes by the watch. Such a feat heretofore that season had been unheard of!

"Oh you lemons!" some onlooker yelled at the varsity. "Can't you stop Rube?"

It was apparent to all that Judd, almost single-handed, was responsible for the seconds' touchdown. Time and again he had opened great holes in the line through which McCabe and Kinyon loped for big gains.

But the varsity as well as the onlookers were destined to more surprises. With the seconds leading, 7 to 0, the varsity took the kickoff and drove the ball savagely up the field to the seconds' five yard line. But every man on the second team was fighting hard now, spurred on by the excited cries of the half hundred spectators.

"Hold 'em, seconds! They can't score on you! Brace up, Rube! Stop those guys!"

The varsity was determined to push across that touchdown. Benz was angry. It was the first time during the season that the seconds had led in the scoring. The pill was a bitter one to swallow when he realized that it had been Judd who was responsible for the showing. Benz tapped Neil, varsity quarterback, on the arm, and whispered in his ear: "Play everything through the left side of the line. It's weakest. We got to have a touchdown!" Then to himself: "Here's where I show up Rube! Right through left tackle for a touchdown. Three plays to make it in. We'll smash him to bits!"

Neil began calling signals. Benz dashed forward, seized the ball and plunged straight toward left tackle. Judd broke through the line, pushing guard and tackle aside, and dropped Benz for a loss of two yards.

The onlookers howled in glee. Coach Phillips was openly pleased at Judd's showing. "That boy can play!" he told himself, then to the varsity. "You fellows are rotten, . . . rotten!" he rasped. "Can't even gain on the scrubs!"

"We'll show you!" challenged Benz, now in a rage. "Just give me that ball again and, . . . and interference!"

The second play headed straight for the left side of the line; headed straight for, . . . but not through. Judd was again equal to the occasion. He toppled the entire interference and in some miraculous way tackled Benz for another loss.

"No wonder we can't gain!" cried Benz, indignant at this failure, "When Rube is playing off side!"

"I wasn't playin' off side!" denied Judd, quick to resent this charge. You'd better take that back or, . . ."

"Or what?" sneered Benz, stepping up, hotly.

Judd, getting control of himself, turned away.

The spectators laughed but Coach Phillips put a stop to their merriment and censured the two

players. "Another word from either of you fellows and I'll send you off the field. Play ball!"

The last try for a touchdown was an end run by Gary, halfback, around left end. Judd spilled the interference and McCabe grabbed the runner. The varsity had lost three yards in three downs against the despised seconds!

McCabe drew Judd back of the line for a punt and Judd booted the ball far down the field out of danger. When scrimmage ended it found the ball in mid-field and the score still, 7 to 0, in favor of the scrubs.

The onlookers gathered in a bunch. "Rah, rah, rah! Rah, rah, rah! Dubs, dubs, dubs!"

It wasn't very often they got such an opportunity to rub it in to the varsity.

Most of the first team members left the field downcast and dejected. It was indeed a disgrace to be walloped by the scrubs with the season almost over. If Pennington should hear of this they would take the Bartlett eleven less seriously.

"What d'you say we celebrate our victory?" suggested McCabe, who had played quarterback for three years on the second and considered this one of the moments in his football career.

"Good idee!" supported Randolph, fullback.

"Where'll we hold the celebration?" asked Parsins, center.

"Down by the bend in the river, to-night, eight

o'clock sharp!" instructed McCabe, "Everyone be there?"

"Yea!"

"How about you, Rube?"

"I reckon I can be there," Judd responded.

"Say, . . . bring your mouth organ with you, will you?" requested McCabe, suddenly. "We want some music."

"Well, . . . maybe."

"All right! Good!" said McCabe, taking it for granted. "Eight o'clock then, fellows. By the way, don't tell a soul. It's just us despised seconds that are in on this celebration, you know."

* * * * *

"If you won't tell me where you are going, Judd, please, . . . how late will you be out?" It was Cateye questioning. Judd generally told where he was going when he went out but to-night he was tight as a clam.

"Can't say," replied Judd, grinning, "Don't know, rather," he added when he saw Cateye's puzzled look.

"Judd," reprimanded Cateye, "I feel like I was some sort of guardian over you. Remember, Benz hasn't gotten even with you yet and every move you make just heaps so many more coals on the fire!"

"I reckon I can take care of myself," drawled Judd, doubling up two rock-like fists. "Good-bye!"

CHAPTER XIII

AN IMPRACTICAL JOKE

Pretty Falls river was a good quarter of a mile from Bartlett College. It was wide and deep and swift! Unhappily for lovers of canoe riding the river possessed too many little falls or jagged, protruding rocks, to make this sport safe. However, there were certain swimming holes which were popular in the late spring and summer weather.

On this particular moonlight night, although the air was chilly, every member of the Bartlett second team gathered for a celebration near the bank of the Pretty Falls. The first arrivals had built a huge bonfire and the entire squad crowded around it. Speeches and music of all sorts seemed to be the main program of the evening.

While the seconds were, as they thought, secretly enjoying themselves, Benz was busy about the campus plotting their destruction. In some mysterious way the news of the would-be celebration had leaked out. It was easy to get some fifty students to co-operate with him in the scheme. In fact, most of the first team were so enthusiastic over the idea that they led the army

on the march to attack the unsuspecting scrubs.

McCabe was last speaker and he was discoursing highly upon the merits of the second team, the honors that it had won, et cetera.

"Gentlemen," said McCabe, "To-day has marked a great day in the history of the second football team. Well may we say with Cæsar, 'I came; I saw; I conquered.' We sent the enemy home with drooping heads, flushing with shame! Their retreat to the locker room was the saddest sight I ever hope to witness. The tears shed by the vanquished would have kept Noah's ark afloat for thirty years. It is with sincere regret that I order the camp fire to be smothered; the arms to be stacked; and the last bugle call to be sounded. We are out of provisions. We must retreat, . . . hey! Beat it, fellows! We are discovered!"

With wild whoops and yells the foe, half a hundred strong, charged down upon the unprepared enemy. McCabe didn't stop to review his troops or present a battle front. He fled like Antony from the clutch of Cæsar. Judd was slow in getting under way but gave a good account of himself until overpowered by sheer force of numbers.

"Tie those legs!" cried one of the enemy, holding his stomach, "He kicks worse than a mule!"

Benz threw a noose over Judd's feet and drew it tight, until he quieted down.

"This is a new game to me," Judd grinned, "But I reckon it's all right."

The enemy laughed. Outposts came up dragging other prisoners. McCabe had almost gotten away but was captured on a fierce tackle by Bartz, who played left end on the varsity.

"What shall we do with 'em, sir?" asked Bartz, turning and saluting Benz, respectfully.

"How many have you captured?"

"Six, sir, not counting Rube and McCabe."

"Good! Make them run the gauntlet and release them!"

"And what shall we do with the other two?"

"Hold them until further orders!"

"Very well, sir."

The other six were forced to run the gauntlet, very unwillingly indeed, for it consisted in crawling upon hands and knees between some thirty pairs of legs, and to receive, upon passing between each pair, a tremendous whack from the palm of the hand of the owner of said pair of legs.

When the unfortunate members of the second team completed the running of the gauntlet not one of them complained of the cold. The heat created was perfectly sufficient to keep them warm all the way home. In fact it was far more penetrating than the soft warmth thrown off by the camp fire.

"Now, skidoo!" yelled some fifty voices, and the six seconds each took a second in making their exit from the scene of the disaster.

"I wonder what they can be going to do with us?" grinned McCabe, to Judd. "Say, . . . do I look like a defeated general?"

"Never give up the ship!" kidded Judd, then to the three fellows who were holding him down: "What's the idea of tyin' my feet?"

"General's orders, sir, General's orders!"

Benz strode up.

"Escort or carry the prisoners down to the old bridge. Forward march, men!"

It did not take long to reach the bridge.

Bartz ran up to Benz. "What are you going to do?" he asked, suspiciously. "Surely you're not thinking of ducking 'em this time of year!"

"No, . . . only scare 'em! We'll hold 'em over the rail an' make believe we're going to drop 'em. Savvy?"

"I getcha. I thought that's what you were up to all the time," apologized Bartz, then in a louder voice: "Which one first, general?"

"Rube!" Benz shouted, sternly. "Here's where he shows the yellow streak," he said to himself. "Before all these fellows, too! . . . Rube you being the main offender, you must pay the penalty with your life. Carry him up to the rail, men!"

The fellows obeyed, soberly.

"You're not goin' to throw me in with my feet tied, are you?" asked Judd, calmly, without an effort to struggle. It was quite dark save for the reflection cast by the moon.

"We sure are!" Benz winked at the crowd that stood just behind, watching proceedings. "Any word you wish to leave for friends or relatives? Any directions as to how you want your earthly goods disposed of?"

"No, I reckon I'm ready to die now. The sooner the better," replied Judd, undaunted.

Benz hesitated. His bluff was not having the desired effect. "Why don't he beg for mercy?" Benz asked himself. "Isn't that guy afraid of anything?"

Then Benz did a daring thing. Without stopping to think of the consequences he seized Judd's shackled feet and lifted them over the low rail. A dozen hands assisted in hoisting Judd's big body up and over. Here was the critical moment. Would he beg now? If not, the fellows must pull him back and acknowledge that he was real stuff.

"How about it, Rube?" asked Benz, watching Judd's face closely, as he helped hold him, suspended, over the river. Not a muscle in Judd's body so much as quivered.

"You might untie my legs, . . ." he said again, quietly. "I never tried to swim that way."

Splash! It was done! Judd had dropped, how, no one knew, . . . except Benz. There were wild cries and shouts; fellows crossed on both sides of the river to try and get trace of him. It was so dark no one saw him reappear, if he did reappear; after he struck the water. Benz, his teeth chattering with fright, ran back and forth upon the bridge not knowing what to do.

"He's drowned!" shouted McCabe, "No man can swim with his feet tied in that river! Benz, your practical joke worked this time!"

"The falls!" somebody shrieked. "They're just a little below that bend. He'll go over them and into the mill pond sure!"

Fellows began running along the river bank below the bend.

"If we only had a lantern!" another cried, frantically.

Several commenced calling Judd's name in the hope that he might hear and answer them.

"I can never go back to college after this!" Benz breathed, hysterically. "He's drowned and of course, I'll be blamed, . . . but no! No one can prove that I let him drop! We'll all be held to account. . . . Oh why, *why* did I do it?"

* * * * *

It was one o'clock and still no signs of Judd. Cateye was growing anxious. He got up, slipped

on a bathrobe, and hobbling over to a chair, sat by the window looking out upon the campus.

"Judd said that he and Benz had almost clashed. I wonder if something has happened to one or both?" Cateye shuddered nervously at the thought.

Suddenly he glimpsed a lone figure running swiftly across the campus, rapidly nearing the dormitory. It was so dark that Cateye could not make out who it was but the very fact that the person was running coupled with the time of night, signified that something unusual had happened.

Whoever it was, was climbing the stairs at a terrific rate. Cateye grasped his crutch and hobbled toward the door. As he did so the door flung open with a bang.

"Cateye!"

"Judd! . . . Why! You're soaked to the skin and blue with cold! What on earth has happened?"

"I reckon they tried to drown me," replied Judd, stepping in and closing the door. "But I fooled 'em! It was a narrow squeak though. If I hadn't struck a big rock I'd have gone over the falls!"

"But I thought you could swim, Judd?"

"Hump! Me swim? With my feet tied? Say, it was enough to keep my head above water in that current!"

"Your feet tied!" exclaimed Cateye, "You don't mean to tell me the fellows . . .!"

"Yep, . . . nope, . . . It was Benz! . . . Benz, that's who 'twas!" Judd was quite excited now and shivering with cold. He tried to remove his dripping shirt.

"Let me help you!" Cateye ripped the shirt off. "But surely Benz wouldn't do that! He wouldn't dare for one thing, . . . and he isn't quite a fool!"

"You'd hardly think it of *it*, would you?" Judd grinned, water trickling down his forehead. If I hadn't hit that rock. . . .! Somehow I made a grab as I went by an' caught it. Then I hung for dear life with one hand an' untied my feet with the other. You know, Cateye, I always did grip pretty hard. But just the same I thought that current would rip my arm right off at the shoulder before I got my feet loose! After I'd got free I hung on for a few minutes more till the fellows went on down the river searchin' for me. Then I struck out for shore an' believe me, I hit the high spots comin' home!"

"And doesn't anyone know but what you're drowned?"

"Only you, . . . an' I!"

"Good! We'll teach the guys a lesson. Here, let me give you a good rub down. Darn this injured knee, anyhow. Just when a fellow needs

help the most I can't be of much assistance. Now listen, you lay low when the bunch comes back. Get under the bed or somewhere. I'll pretend I don't know where you are. We'll teach them to play any more practical jokes!"

Judd grinned. "That'ud kind of be turnin' the tables, eh?"

"Kind of, you bet! I hear somebody coming upstairs now! Take this alcohol bottle and rub yourself good to keep from catching cold. Get into the closet out of sight. Quick!"

Cateye waited until the footsteps reached the head of the stairs, then flung open the door and limped into the hall on his crutch. He met face to face with Benz.

"Rather late turning in, aren't you? Say, . . . do you know where Judd is? I'm getting rather anxious. It's two o'clock and after, . . . and he never kept very late hours!"

Benz's face was a pale white; his lips were trembling; he seemed near collapse.

"He's, . . . he's, . . . I think he's drowned!"

"What!" Cateye's concern was extremely realistic. "Drowned!"

"Shss!" warned Benz, glancing about nervously, "Don't wake the whole dorm! Step in your room here and I'll tell you the whole story."

Cateye backed in and sat down, turning on the light. Benz seated himself on the edge of the

bed and clutched the bed sheets despairingly.

"Great heavens, man, don't keep me in suspense!" groaned Cateye, "Judd drowned! How'd it happen?"

"Well, . . ." began Benz, "It all came out of a little joke!"

"So it was one of your pranks, eh? Drowning a man!" Cateye's voice was hard and cruel.

"I didn't mean it, Cateye, honest! I mean, . . . the joke to go so far," Benz hastened to add, realizing that he had almost confessed. "We broke up a celebration the second team was having; captured Rube and McCabe and planned on giving 'em a good scare. So we carried 'em down to the bridge an' held Rube over the rail. I, . . . we never meant to drop him, *honest,* but, . . ."

"Why did you tie his feet?" As soon as Cateye asked the question he realized that he had pulled "a bone."

"Why did I? . . . Did I tell you that?" Benz asked, wild-eyed.

"You sure did!" insisted Cateye, seeing a way out.

"Well, . . . he put up such a fight we had to do something," explained Benz, weepingly, "And I just said we never meant to drop him!"

"Is anybody down at the river now?"

"Yes, the whole bunch. They're going to keep up the search till morning. I sent Bartz down to

Tarlton to see the sheriff and get help. We're goin' to drag the river for his body in the morning, . . ." Here Benz broke down completely.

Cateye heard Judd choking a laugh and realized he had to say something or the jig was up.

"And what are you doing here?" he demanded, savagely, "You, . . . you who are probably more to blame for this, . . . this murder than anyone else! Why aren't you out doing something to help recover his body?"

"I, . . . I, . . . oh Cateye, don't rub it in so! I couldn't stand it any longer. I had to come away. Oh, it's all a terrible nightmare to me. He can't be dead, . . . he must be alive! Let me go, . . . I've got to be by myself!"

Cateye did not try to restrain Benz. In fact he was mighty glad to have him go!

As soon as Benz had disappeared up the hall Judd stepped softly from the closet, the towel stuffed in his mouth, and fell upon the bed, shaking with laughter.

"How's that for real acting?" grinned Cateye.

"Gee, that's worth getting drowned to listen to!" howled Judd, "They're going to drag the river for me in the mornin'! Did you hear that? Well, . . . I wish 'em luck. I hope they find me. I reckon it's rather awkward for a ghost like me not to know where my body is, . . . floatin' around somewhere on the bottom of the river!"

"Shss! Judd, don't make so much noise! This will be the richest joke on Benz and the fellows for that matter, that ever came off. It'll teach Benz a lesson he'll never forget. You keep out of sight till after breakfast today. The whole college will know about it by that time!"

"Trust me, pal," assured Judd, "Most people can't see ghosts, anyhow!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE CONFESSION

Benz, after breaking the news to Cateye, hurried to his room where he paced up and down for a whole hour, undecided as to what best to do. Finally, unable to stand the strain longer, he grabbed his cap and rushed from the dormitory. It was four A.M. and not yet light.

Ten minutes later the good Professor Windell, president of the college, was awakened by a loud thumping on his front door. He stumbled sleepily out of bed and opened the window.

"What's amiss here?" he called down.

"Rube!" gasped Benz, "Oh, Mister Windell, come down an' let me in, quick! I want to confess! I did it! It was all my fault!"

"Just a minute, young man!" Professor Windell was waking fast now. He jerked on his purple bathrobe and jumped his feet into some house slippers and made haste to escort poor Benz into the library.

"Have a chair. Now, compose yourself! What's the trouble?"

Benz did not appear to notice the proffered seat but strode nervously up and down the room.

"Rube's drowned!" he said, suddenly, and seemed to shudder at the very words.

"Drowned!" repeated the president, greatly shocked, "Drowned!"

"Yes, sir . . ." Benz pulled himself together with an effort, then began to explain as though it was a relief to get the matter off his mind. "You see the second team was havin' a celebration at the bend of the river last night because they beat the varsity. Well—I collected a bunch of fellows and we broke up the meeting. We caught Rube and McCabe an' we thought . . . er . . .er . . . that is, I thought I'd like to scare Rube. So, as I was leader, I ordered the guys to carry him down to the old bridge an' hold him over the rail."

"You!" broke in President Windell, excitedly.

"Yes,—me!" cried Benz, bound to make a clean breast of it. "I didn't mean to do what I did but for some reason I . . . I grabbed his feet an' . . . an' when we held him over the rail . . . I . . . I let go!"

"What!"

"I don't know why I did it, sir. We only meant to scare him. I never intended that we should drop him in. Honest, I didn't!" Benz's tone turned to pleading. "Oh, it'll just about finish my folks, Mister Windell. What shall I do? . . . What *shall* I do?"

President Windell was a highly strung, very

excitable little man, well along in years. The sudden tragic news brought by Benz at such an early hour had done much to upset him.

"How do you know that Judd's actually drowned?" he asked, after a moment of serious deliberation.

"Why I . . . we've searched the river . . . as far as we could see he never even came up!" Benz answered, then added with conviction, "He's drowned all right!"

"But he could swim, couldn't he?" persisted the professor, hopefully. "Perhaps he . . ."

"That's just it!" interrupted Benz, despairingly. "He might have had a good chance if he could . . . but you see . . . his feet were tied!"

"Feet tied!" President Windell laid a hand upon Benz and shook him. "See here—what were you young men up to? . . . That's not much short of murder!"

"I know . . . it sounds almost like it," admitted Benz.

"It's apt to go pretty hard with you," snapped the president, "Wait here until I go and dress. I want you to take me to where this happened. And while you're waiting, put in a call for the sheriff at Tarlton. He'll have to investigate anyway and the sooner he's on the job the better."

The professor disappeared upstairs. Benz hesitated a moment, his hands twitching nervously.

Then he picked up the telephone and asked for long distance in a voice that faltered brokenly.

* * * * *

At breakfast that morning tense excitement reigned. News of the tragedy had just been spread broadcast and there were many vacant chairs. A great number of students had rushed for the river but a few of the calmer ones and those who loved their appetites above all else, answered the roll call and contented themselves in stowing away the usual number of pancakes.

Just as the meal was about over, Bartz staggered in, weak and exhausted. He had run many miles up and down the river bank in the hopes of discovering Judd—but a needle in a haystack might have been more readily found than Judd's corpse in a river bed.

A great crowd thronged about Bartz, asking him hundreds of different questions, excitedly. He made no attempt to answer them; in fact, his one desire seemed to be to get a bite to eat and steady his nerves. All he would say was: "Let me alone, fellows. I'm tired. Been up all night. No, we haven't found his body yet. Yes . . . the sheriff's placed us all under temporary arrest. He's got our names an' he's coming after the bunch of us and take us down to Tarlton for a hearing at nine o'clock this morning. Oh, they'll drag the river all day if they don't find him. Yes,

we're going to wire his folks in a couple of hours. For heaven's sake, guys, let me be! I need a rest!"

A decided gloom prevailed over the college. Judd, although he had been called a rube had become a great favorite and very popular at Bartlett.

The students looked at Cateye, sympathetically, when he hobbled down to breakfast half an hour later. His face was red and his eyes, . . . yes, unmistakably swollen from excessive weeping. Cateye was met upon all sides with sincere words of sympathy and regret for the loss of his beloved room-mate. To all these declarations Cateye made the sober reply: "Thanks, fellows, thanks. Your grief and sympathy quite overwhelm me." Then, dabbing his face sadly with a handkerchief for effect, Cateye smothered many almost unsuppressible giggles. It was turning into such a rich joke! If no one discovered Judd before the time was set to bring him out, it would be great!

Judd, meanwhile, had remained within the close confinement of his room awaiting until the time was ripe to resurrect himself.

At eight o'clock President Windell suspended all morning classes and the entire college practically went into mourning. Benz, overcome with grief, confessed time and again his part in the tragedy wherever he could find an audience.

Within another hour the sheriff came down from Tarlton and gravely proceeded to corral all the participants in the "foul murder." He had been newly appointed custodian of the law and was overly anxious to perform his duties well.

Almost the entire student body congregated on the campus shortly after nine o'clock, to witness the departure of the sheriff with those directly implicated in the plot.

"I can't tell yet what I'll do with ye!" the sheriff said, addressing the students under arrest. "But this here drownin' is a serious crime and, some of ye will have to pay for it! That's just the way with ye college sports anyhow. Always up to some thing and never satisfied till ye've committed some devilment. But ye'll pay for this, . . . mark my words, . . . and ye'll pay dear!"

Some students, including Pole and Potts, arrived at this moment. They had been helping drag the river but, despairing of recovering the body, had returned. A crowd surrounded them at once.

"What luck?"

"Find any trace of him?"

These and many more anxious questions were hurled at the weary searchers.

"We found his cap down by the bend in the river, that's all," responded Pole, sadly, passing the cap about for inspection. Then, noticing

Benz in the throng: "Say, have they wired his folks yet?"

". . . No."

"Well, that had better be attended to. They've got to know it sooner or later and we should notify them immediately."

"I'll see that a message is sent right away," replied Benz, brokenly.

At this juncture, Cateye, who had been watching from his window across the campus, decided that the time was ripe for Judd's resurrection. In fact the time was over-ripe. If Cateye had imagined what tremendous proportions the supposed drowning of Judd might assume he would never have devised the plan to cure Benz of his practical jokes.

"You'd better be taking that stroll right away, Judd," directed Cateye. "The sheriff's just about ready to depart with the bunch and it looks like every last student is out to bid farewell. Now do just as I told you and hurry or you'll be too late!"

Judd lost no time in descending the stairs and stepping quietly out of the dormitory. He stalked leisurely across the campus, passing several students on the way but they were so busy talking about the night's terrible happenings that they did not recognize him. In fact, Judd actually succeeded in mingling with the crowd, so intent were they all upon the departure of the sheriff and his prisoners. He took a position by the side

of Benz, who was tearfully bidding good-bye. Judd, for the moment, was touched but remembering the many things Benz had done against him he thought the "cure" might do him good.

Of a sudden Benz chanced to turn and caught sight of Judd. At first he stared, wild-eyed, and and in open-mouthed astonishment; then he recoiled from the terrific shock. He could not believe his eyes.

"Oh, fellows, help me! I'm seeing things!" Benz shrieked, covering his face with his hands and endeavoring to get away.

Everyone looked in Benz's direction and at the sight of Judd the greater portion of the crowd dispersed to a safe distance. Judd had come among them so quietly that the sight of him was a great shock.

Pole was the first to recover himself.

"Great guns, Rube!" he exclaimed, astounded. "I thought you were drowned!"

"Me! Drowned?" drolled Judd, slowly, "I should say not!"

"But where have you been all this time?" cried Potts.

Those who had sufficiently recovered, at least enough to believe their eyes, began gathering about joyfully.

"Up in my room," replied Judd, suppressing a yawn.

"How did you get out? Why didn't you let us know that you were o. k? What did you hold off so long for?" The questions were coming thick and fast.

"I didn't think about it and besides I was busy catching up sleep."

"Catching up sleep!"

"Yep,—I didn't get to bed last night till after one o'clock. And then, I got my clothes all wet and had to dry 'em out before I could appear in public again."

The joy of the students at having Judd restored to them as if from death itself, finally surpassed all bounds. They made a grand rush for the big, awkward youth and lifting him protestingly to their shoulders, they bore him once about the campus before releasing him, in this manner proclaiming the glad tidings.

The sheriff, disappointed at having his bid for prominence spoiled, still lingered about the students. At last he stepped up to Judd.

"Young man, do ye wish to swear out a warrant agin any of these rascals?"

"No, thanks" grinned Judd, "I reckon it isn't a very serious offence to duck a feller, is it?"

"Not very; but er,—er, attempted murder is different! Quite different!"

"You might give them each thirty days for a poor attempt," suggested Judd.

The bunch laughed.

Judd turned to Pole, who stood holding his cap. "I'll thank you for my lid, Pole. It's the only sky piece I've got."

"Well, let's lift the crepe and postpone the funeral," urged Potts, "The corpse has decided to take on new life and the mourners are wearing glad rags again. Classes begin this afternoon at one P.M. as usual. This way out!"

The crowd broke up, joyfully.

CHAPTER XV

JUDD GAINS A PROMOTION

One week more dragged slowly by; dragged because Cateye and Judd had been suspended for their antics in regard to the drowning incident. Benz escaped with only a severe reprimand. Cateye assumed the entire blame for the affair and sought to have his room-mate released, but President Windell declared: "One is as guilty as the other," and forced both boys to do penance.

The intended cure for Benz had been a splendid failure in more ways than one. True, Benz felt highly elated to know that Judd was not drowned but he also was indignant because Judd allowed the students to think him dead and let the affair gain such prominence. Since the incident Benz's popularity had decreased fully fifty percent. He was greeted with taunts and jeers and nicknamed, "The Impractical Joker." Life had grown exceedingly unpleasant. Benz avoided everyone that he could, imagining that the whole college was turned against him. He remained close within the seclusion of his room during idle moments; practiced football somewhat indifferently; scarcely ever opened his mouth except when it came time

to eat; and above all things he kept out of Judd's sight. He was very thankful that Judd had been suspended. This kept the rube from football practice and Benz could again star against the seconds.

Poor, mis-used second team! The week following their disastrous celebration on the bank of the Pretty Falls River had been a trying one for them. Minus their best player, the varsity had gone at them with a vengeance, piling up top heavy scores in every scrimmage, until McCabe remarked one night after an unusually crushing defeat: "Fellows, I feel like Napoleon after the battle of Waterloo."

Cateye had hoped that this joke might prove an ending of hostilities between Benz and Judd but he now realized the foolhardiness of his plan and wished many times that he had never suggested it to Judd. The return joke on Benz had produced exactly the opposite effect than that desired. Besides, Judd had lost an entire week of valuable football practice and one week from tomorrow, upon Thanksgiving day, came the great game with Pennington!

The contest this year meant more than formerly. The two colleges were not only intense rivals but neither had been defeated throughout the present season. Reports from Pennington claimed the strongest eleven in the history of the college.

Why, Pennington had defeated the State University, 9 to 0, a short time ago, which victory rightfully gave her the title of State Champion!

Bartlett supporters in turn, heralded their eleven as the greatest bunch of warriors ever gotten together. But, although the students were loyal to the core, deep down in their hearts they doubted whether Bartlett even so much as had a chance against Pennington this year. Pennington, claimants of the State Championship by virture of their victory over the State University, a heretofore unheard of exploit! Pennington, the rival college, which had not only defeated some of the same teams played by Bartlett but had even doubled and in one case tripled the scores! On paper the Pennington team seemed much the stronger eleven but despite this fact everyone at Bartlett was looking eagerly forward to the day when the unbeaten colleges would clash.

Thursday morning, one week before the big game, Pole rushed jubilantly into Cateye's room.

"Hurrah! Your suspensions are raised!" he cried.

"What's that?" Cateye and Judd shouted, jumping to their feet.

"That's what!" rejoiced Pole. "Gee, that's great news! I just heard about it a minute ago."

"You bet it's great news! Whoopee, Judd, that means football practice again to-night!"

Cateye began to dance a Highland fling of his own invention. "And my injured knee is practically well now. Maybe I won't be able to hit that old line, huh?"

Judd and Pole winked at each other.

"The silly boy," grinned Judd.

"The news has upset him," laughed Pole.

The appearance of Judd and Cateye upon the gridiron that afternoon was the signal for a great ovation. The members of the second team crowded about their idol, Judd, and immediately began plotting the destruction of the "beloved" varsity. Cateye, meanwhile, was kept busy answering greetings from his old team-mates.

"Hello, Cateye, how's that knee of yours?" It was Neil, quarterback, speaking.

"Fine!" responded Cateye, adjusting his shoulder pads.

"That's good. I sure am glad to see you back. Between you and me, Cateye, left guard has been the weak spot on our team since you were laid up. Besides, Benz hasn't been playing up to standard and although we've been trimming the seconds we haven't got that old fighting spirit. The boys are due to recover their form to-day."

"Everybody out!" ordered Coach Phillips. The players trotted from the locker room onto the field.

"Billings, you take right guard on the seconds

and Cateye, your old position at left guard on the varsity. We'll have fifteen minutes of signal practice and a thirty minute's scrimmage. Lively now!"

Practice that afternoon did go off better. Benz played with a vengeance, eager to out do any play that Judd might make, and he was successful in tearing off several long gains; through Judd's position too! Benz was elated.

The explanation was quite simple. Judd, assigned the position of right guard found that he was pitted directly against Cateye who played left guard for the varsity. Rather than show up his room-mate Judd made half-hearted attempts to stem the varsity's advance, and the seconds, losing some of their confidence in Judd's stonewall defence, allowed the varsity to score almost at will.

A hundred or so onlookers, enthused by the varsity's exceptional showing, shouted, "Oh you Pennington!" until their voices were hoarse.

It was a badly bruised and dejected second team that crawled off the field after scrimmage was over following one of the worst trouncings that they had ever experienced. The varsity, upon the other hand, was bubbling over with pep and renewed confidence.

"Guess we've found our stride again!" cried Benz, almost the first cheerful words he had uttered in a week.

"Found our stride!" ejaculated Pole, "Why man, we're away ahead of our stride."

"Don't get too cocky over that showing," warned Bartz, inclined to be cautious. "Even the best of 'em fall, you know."

"Bartz is right," spoke up Neil, "In order to keep our record clean up to the Pennington game we've got to wallop Paulson this coming Saturday. And that'll be a hard game too. We can't expect to loaf and win. We've got to be in the fight every minute!"

"We'll be there, kid!" grunted the big Oole.

Judd and Cateye walked back to the dormitory together. Cateye, for some reason that Judd could not understand, was not very talkative.

"The varsity sure did rip us seconds up to-day," began Judd, for the nth time, trying to get an answer from his room-mate.

Cateye unlocked the door to his room, stepped in, and swung about, facing Judd.

"Judd, what did you do that for?" he questioned, softly.

"Do what? rejoined Judd, evasively.

"True, you didn't do anything in scrimmage to-day," admitted Cateye, "But I know the reason why."

"That's easy, I haven't played for over a week," retorted Judd, "I'll tell you it takes practice to—."

"Nonsense, Judd! A kid could have played as

well as you did this afternoon. Don't try to bluff me; I know you too well. If you'd have played any other position on that team you'd have been a living cyclone, but just because Coach Phillips put you in against me you laid down!"

"It isn't so!" protested Judd, weakly.

"It is so!" persisted Cateye, "And what's more, if we have the same positions to-morrow and you play that way I'll go to the coach about it!"

"Well,—s'pose it is so," surrendered Judd, "No man on earth can make me go back on my room-mate—."

"Judd, you don't look at things in the right light," argued Cateye. "I know that you're true blue to me and all that but you're not true to your college,—your team."

"Why not?" demanded Judd, kicking at a rug.

"Because, you are not giving your team the best that is in you! Some time ago you sacrificed a chance to play on the first team because you would not accept my position. To-day, by your miserable playing, you lowered yourself in the coach's estimation and undoubtedly made me look good. But you know, and *I* know, Judd that there are few football men who could hold that line against you if you cared to get through. It is your duty to play your best regardless of circumstances."

"I think more of my friends than any old foot-

ball team in the country," mumbled Judd, stubbornly. "There's no use talking Cateye, I'll lay down, every time he pits me against you.

Luckily Judd was shifted to right tackle the following afternoon and a chance for further trouble was averted. The varsity was not quite as successful as on the previous day and it took a hard fight to drub the seconds in a short scrimmage.

The next day, Saturday, Bartlett met and defeated Paulson, 20 to 7, thus keeping her record clean for the entire season up to the final game. The high class of football that the little college displayed in besting Paulson, a team touted to be her equal, gladdened the hearts of every Bartlett rooter. The spirits of all were now fairly on edge for the coming contest with Pennington, just five days away. Some even conceded Bartlett an equal chance but when respective records were compared the skeptics shook their heads. Although both teams had clean slates as to victories, Pennington had played against some stronger teams than Bartlett and seemed to possess a much greater scoring machine.

Cateye had only played in one quarter of the Paulson game. Coach Phillips was saving him for the big fray and taking no risks of his knee giving out. Judd watched the game from the bench.

Monday afternoon marked the last day of scrimmage for the varsity. Coach Phillips had decided to spend the remaining two days at secret signal practice. Consequently the college turned out almost to a man to watch their idol pigskin chasers maul the scrubs as a final demonstration of their ability to whip Pennington. Inspired by the wild cheers of the student body and the realization that the season's biggest game was only two days distant, the varsity fairly outdid itself.

But the faithful second team was resolved to make the varsity earn every touchdown that they secured and fought fiercely to stop each play. For fifteen minutes the battered seconds withstood the onslaught and actually succeeded in pushing across a touchdown themselves. After this the game became a rout and finally ended in a 56 to 7 score. Both elevens left the field, physically fit and in good spirits, but dead tired.

"Whew!" gasped Benz, throwing a shoe the length of the locker room, "Talk about marathon races! I'll bet I ran ten or twenty miles up and down the field scoring touchdowns."

"Great snakes! Did you hear that, guys?" broke in Knox, a second string man, "The swelled head only scored two touchdowns himself and yet he runs ten or twenty miles! What were you doing, Benz, playing solitaire?"

"Never you mind," retorted Benz, amid

laughter; then, seeing a way out: "Possibly, Knox, you have never heard of Miles Standish. That's the kind of Miles I run."

"Zowie!"

"Take him out!"

"Stow it!"

"As bright as mud!"

"Call a doctor!"

"A cold shower for that!" shouted Neil, "That stuff is too deep for we'uns!"

A dozen hands seized the unwilling Benz and thrust him cruelly under a cold, cold shower.

"B-r-r-r-r-r! Let me out!" sputtered Benz, making a tremendous struggle. "I don't mind the cold but that water is wet!"

"A double dose for that!" howled Pole, and Benz was forced to submit to another flood of H_2O. He was finally released and took his punishment good naturedly. The fun went on, first one, and then the other of the fellows being made the object for humorous attack.

Of a sudden the locker door opened and Coach Phillips stepped in. Instantly all laughing and talking ceased. Fellows in half-dressed attitudes hesitated before proceeding. It was evident by the look on Coach Phillips' face that he had something important to say.

"Any of the fellows left yet?"

"No!"

"Good!" snapped the coach. "I have a little something that I want to say to you all before you go. I,—"

"Ouch! Have a heart!" Benz had unwittingly slapped Pole across the small of the back with a wet bath towel. A titter of laughter went up.

"Benz, stop that fooling and pay attention!" Coach Phillips' voice was unusually hard and penetrating.

"Fun is all right in its place," continued the coach, "I'm glad to see you fellows light-hearted and care free. That is usually a good sign before a game. But too much of this sort of business will have a disastrous effect. Such mental attitudes breed self confidence. Self confidence breeds listlessness; and listlessness spells defeat. Now don't misunderstand me. I want you to have a certain amount of confidence, in yourselves, in the team. But beware of over-confidence! Over-confidence will do more than misplays or anything else to bring defeat. Just because we have gone through the season thus far unbeaten, don't for one moment imagine that we are invincible. In order to win Thursday it will take all the skill, strength, and endurance that you fellows have! From now on until the big game is over I want every fellow on the varsity to forget his studies. There is no occasion to look astonished, (as several players gasped). It is a new procedure at Bartlett, I

know, but I believe a wise one. You have all worked hard and kept up in your marks throughout the entire season. Now I want complete relaxation. Don't look at a class book. Work hard in football practice and memorize those plays so well that there is not a possibility of mistake. Forget about the game. Get plenty of sleep the next two nights. Take good care of yourselves. When you trot on the field Thanksgiving day I expect to see the best physically and mentally fit team that Bartlett college has ever turned out. Remember, it is not only brawn but brains that wins games now-a-days and you fellows must be in the fight with minds and bodies every minute!"

"Yea!"

"I wish to thank every member of the second team for the loyal manner in which you have come out night after night in order to make a good first team possible," went on Coach Phillips, ignoring the show of enthusiasm. "I am sure that you will all feel amply repaid if your efforts will have made the varsity victorious in the coming big game. Just as a great army depends upon those left behind to properly feed and clothe it, so does a varsity football team depend upon its second team to keep it at its playing strength and build it up through scrimmage. A good first team can hardly ever be attained without a good second team. The fact that we have had an exceptionally

fine second team this year has been largely responsible for the success of the varsity.

"I have already talked longer and said more than I at first intended. The second team's work is done for the year but the varsity's hardest work is yet to come. I want all of you varsity men to report for signal practice to-morrow at two P. M. All of you may go now except Judd Billings and McCabe of the seconds."

The fellows filed noisily out of the locker room leaving the wondering Judd and the elated McCabe to interview Coach Phillips.

"What have I done now?" demanded Judd of McCabe, when he was ordered to remain.

"Don't you know, you rube!" hissed McCabe, joyfully, in his ear. "We're promoted!"

"Promoted?"

"Yes,—unless I miss my guess he's going to tell us to report for practice with the varsity!"

"That would be kind of nice, wouldn't it?" replied Judd, trying to conceal his joy at the very thought.

Coach Phillips closed the locker door and came up, facing the two eager youths.

"Both of you report for signal practice with the varsity to-morrow. It is possible that you may get into the game Thursday, for a short time at least. Remember what I told the rest about keeping in condition and not studying until the game is

over. McCabe, come to my room to-night at seven. I want you to get the signals well in mind and especially some new plays. That is all."

The coach turned abruptly and left the locker room.

McCabe and Judd stood eyeing each other, the news seeming too good to be true. Finally McCabe broke the trance by running across and thumping Judd joyfully.

"What did I tell you?" he shouted, "And it's my first chance in four years!"

CHAPTER XVI

BEFORE THE GAME

Wednesday night, the eve of the coming contest with the mighty Pennington eleven, found Bartlett college in a state of wild confusion and excitement. The campus was lined with students and returning alumni, some of the latter having come hundreds of miles just to see the unbeaten elevens clash.

News from the village of Tarlton announced every hotel and place of accommodation to be over-crowded with visitors, friends, relatives, and alumni, waiting for the morrow.

A delegation of students had been busy all day collecting empty dry goods boxes, odd pieces of wood, limbs of trees, and what not for the creating of a large bonfire should Bartlett be victorious. All this refuse was concealed behind one of the dormitories ready to be dragged out and placed in the center of the campus pending a successful termination of the game.

Judd and Cateye watched the throngs jostling back and forth across the campus from their window in the dormitory. The football men had been given strict orders not to mingle with the

crowd and to retire early. The two chums felt rather awed by the spirit of the occasion and the significance of the morrow. For a long time they sat side by side listening to the college yells and songs drifting up to them from below. Although a veteran football man, Cateye was deeply affected by the display of enthusiasm and college spirit.

"What a wonderful thing it all is," he found himself musing aloud.

"What all is?" inquired Judd.

"Why,—this college spirit."

"Hump!" breathed Judd, lightly, "I thought you was talkin' about some patent medicine."

The careless reply and Judd's former actions caused Cateye to wonder if college spirit really meant anything to the rube. Cateye knew Judd to be intensely loyal to his friends and wished that his chum might show that same sense of loyalty to his college or team.

After a fifteen minute silence Judd began to show signs of restlessness which Cateye wrongly interpreted.

"Nervous?" he asked, softly, throwing an arm about his chum's brawny shoulders.

"Naw!" growled Judd, disgustedly, "Just anxious for fear I won't get a chance to play tomorrow."

The singing and yelling did not cease until after eleven o'clock but two hours before this time

Coach Phillips made sure that every football man was snugly stowed away in bed. Judd dropped off to sleep immediately upon retiring, but nothing short of chloroform could have caused Cateye to lose consciousness while the din kept up. His mind was too occupied with the trend of coming events.

As the last song was sung and the last yell was yelled Cateye delved into the mysteries of slumberland.

For two hours his rest was undisturbed. But after this came more interruptions. Cateye awoke with a start. The same sort of chill crept up his spine as on the night of Judd's arrival. This time, however, Cateye sensed at once just what had produced the sensation. Judd was talking in his sleep again. It was his first offense since that memorable night so long ago.

"Gimme that ball! . . . No, I'm not hurt! Jes' gimme the ball an' I'll take her across! . . . Signals over! That's it! My number. Look out, there!"

The talking stopped and Judd began to grind his teeth, an unpleasant sound, especially at night. This was too much for Cateye. He bounded out of bed and switched on the light. At the same moment Judd came out of his nightmare by emitting a loud groan and kicking the bed free of covers.

"What's the matter?" gasped Cateye.

"Oh, nothin'," grinned Judd, sleepily, "I only made a touchdown."

Cateye crawled back into bed, shivering from the aftermath. Judd soon began to snore regularly showing what little effect the scoring of a touchdown had upon him. After listening to the hoarse rumble for a few minutes Cateye buried his head in a pillow and muttered to himself: "Oh, for a maxim silencer!" Despite the snores he soon fell asleep and did not awaken until late Thanksgiving morning.

By noon of the eventful day an enormous crowd of people had gathered, representing loyal rooters and supporters of the respective colleges, Bartlett and Pennington, as well as those impartial to either team, who were attracted for sheer love of the game itself.

The college grounds shone with bobbing pennants and colors; the Red and Blue of Pennington; the Black and Gold of Bartlett. Outside the gate to the gridiron at one o'clock a great throng of football enthusiasts clamored for entrance.

One half hour later a special train, carrying the rival eleven, Pennington; a band, and five hundred rooters, pulled in. As the Penningtonites leaped off the train dressed in full football garb; red and blue jerseys, Indian blankets of the same color design and striped hosiery, they received a tremendous ovation from the assembled crowd.

Led by their college band the football warriors paraded to the gridiron followed by a wild column of Pennington rooters, each waving a red and blue pennant. The sight was very impressive and thrilling.

When, at exactly two-twenty, the Pennington eleven trotted, unheralded, onto the field and, tossing off their blue Indian blankets, began to run through some snappy signal work, from the Pennington stands a mass of red and blue rose and fell in perfect rhythm to the tune of "The Warrior," Pennington's football song.

The Bartlett rooters in the stands directly across the field tried their best to defeat the demonstration being made by Pennington, combining the efforts of band and cheer leaders in order to do so, but the momentary enthusiasm of the visiting college at sight of their splendid eleven, for a time, eclipsed all attempts to drown them out.

In the locker room sixteen Bartlett team-mates, primed for battle, heard the roar that swept across the field as the Pennington eleven swooped upon the gridiron. Benz, pulling his shoulder pads in place, strode about the room, nervous and anxious for the fray to begin. Other players showed signs of uneasiness. Judd was the only one on the team who seemed perfectly calm. As the din was at its height he turned to Pole, who had laced and unlaced his shoe three times for no

reason whatever, and remarked quietly: "A noisy bunch, aren't they?"

At this moment Coach Phillips entered. He had been watching the enemy eleven as they ran through light signal practice before the frenzied crowd.

A few of the players gathered in a semi-circle about him, arms thrown over each other's shoulders. Some were laboriously rubbing resin into their hands to insure against fumbling the ball. Others, a little affected by the mighty demonstration going on from without, paced restlessly up and down.

"It's going to be a real battle to-day," warned the coach. "Pennington has a wonderful aggregation. Their defeat of the State University some weeks ago gives them the highest rating of any team in this part of the country. A victory to-day puts Bartlett on the football map as never before. And in order to win we must fight, fight, fight, every second of the sixty minutes!

"Pennington has been depending largely this season upon the great work of Gordon, fullback. He is a giant, six feet tall, weight two hundred and fourteen pounds, and fast on his feet. He is the man you must stop! Pennington has won every game this year in the first half. They use this Gordon as a human battering ram, breaking up the opposing line and making victory easy. No

eleven this season had been able to check his advances!

"Stop their slashing attack the first half, fellows, and you'll win the game. The reason General Grant was so successful in his campaigns was that he did not realize when he was defeated. He advanced despite his defeats. That's the spirit I want you fellows to show! If you fail to gain ground in one attempt put just that much more strength into the next attempt. Game starts in ten minutes, fellows, so you'd better be getting out on the field. Benz, remember to hit that line lower. Neil, call your signals fast and snappy. Keep the team up and at 'em. You linemen, the fate of to-day's game is largely up to you. You must shoulder the brunt of the work and shatter the Pennington attack. The men who will start to-day's game are,—"

Sixteen heads bobbed suddenly up and sixteen pairs of entreating eyes focused themselves upon the coach.

"Left end, Bartz; left tackle, Oole; left guard, Frey; center, Williams; right guard, McKean; right tackle, Potts; right end, Pole; quarterback, Neil; left half, Gary; right half, Patterson; fullback, Hoffmaster. Now, out of here, every one of you! Show lots of pep and don't let that crowd bother you! You have played in front of big crowds before and won. Do it today!"

The eleven fortunate men jumped nimbly to their feet and filed quickly out of the locker room.

Judd slapped Cateye on the back as his chum arose to go.

"Give 'em fits, pal," he said, simply.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIRST HALF

The appearance of the Bartlett eleven touched a match to all the explosives that the Bartlett rooters had stored up and a riot of deafening sound rocked the field.

The crowd easily outnumbered any ever congregated at Bartlett. Half of the eastern bleachers had been reserved for the Pennington rooters, while the section directly across was occupied by Bartlett enthusiasts. The seating capacity was greatly overtaxed. At least two thousand people hovered behind the goal posts at the ends of the field and swarms were even accommodated in roped off areas between the foot of the bleachers and the playing lines.

Both teams appeared a trifle nervous before the game commenced, undoubtedly caused by the magnitude of the crowd and the importance of winning.

McDonald, Thorpe, Preston, McCabe, and Judd, all Bartlett substitutes, swathed in extra sweaters, seated themselves by the sidelines, in an advantageous position, to watch the game.

Benz, captain, conferred with Melvin, Penning-

ton captain. The referee tossed a coin. Melvin won the toss and chose to receive the kickoff. Benz selected the north goal for Bartlett to defend. The two teams lined up quickly. An avalanche of sound came from the spectators.

"Are you ready?" shrieked the referee to the Pennington captain.

Melvin raised his hand in the affirmative.

"Ready, Bartlett?"

But Benz was crouching, tying up a shoe lace, preparatory to kicking, and trying to overcome his nervousness. This prolonged the tenseness.

After an age, it seemed, he straightened up; the referee raised his arm; the Bartlett men leaned forward, expectantly; the whistle screeched; Benz booted the ball; and the great game was on!

It was a splendid kickoff. The ball rose, spinning like a top and with enough impetus to send it far down the field.

Knapp, Pennington quarterback, captured the pigskin on his fifteen yard line and dodged in behind his quickly formed interference. For five,—ten,—fifteen yards he ran; his advance guard toppling man after man who attempted to reach him!

The crowd was on its feet, howling like mad!

"Stop him!" shrieked the Bartlett stands.

"Go on, Pennington!" bawled the Red and Blue.

A lanky individual now loomed up in the path

of the oncoming trio. It was Pole! He hurled himself straight at the knees of the interference and the men went down like ten pins.

All save Knapp. Small of stature and a veritable rabbit on his feet; his interference now gone, he depended upon his own cleverness to gain more ground. He eluded the too eager arms of Benz who missed his tackle completely and struck face downward on the sod.

The spectators were now become fairly wild with excitement. Such a brilliant run at the very outset of the game was entirely unlooked for!

"He's got a clear field!" screamed some voice above the din.

"A touchdown from kickoff!" cried a Pennington enthusiast.

Knapp, in order to escape all opponents, now skirted the edge of the gridiron. He passed within a few feet of the Bartlett substitutes who were wildly hoping that some one might down him.

Judd's quick eye saw only one man between Knapp and a touchdown. That man was Cateye!

"Get that guy, Cateye!" bellowed Judd, making a megaphone of his hands.

In that frenzied moment, above the terrific din, Cateye heard and recognized Judd's voice wafted out to him. The words seemed to give him added zeal. He raced across the field toward the speeding Knapp. The little quarterback, confronted

with this new obstacle, turned in sharply as Cateye lurched through the air, in order to avoid the tackle. But Cateye had judged the distance too true and Knapp had dodged too late. There was an impact as shoulder met thigh and a crunching sound as the two rolled over and over upon the turf; then mighty cheers.

"That-a-boy, Cateye!" barked Judd, joyously, while the Bartlett stands echoed his name.

"Yea, Knapp!" thundered the Penningtonites.

Knapp's fine sixty yard run injected a world of pep into his team and restored their confidence. The Bartlett eleven, on the contrary, was badly disheartened and shaken up by the suddenness of the spectacular run.

With the ball on Bartlett's twenty-five yard line and four plays to make a touchdown the Pennington team assailed the Black and Gold line viciously.

On the first play the ball went to Gordon, the heavy full back, who plowed through the right side of Bartlett's line for eight yards.

"Wow! Nothing to it!" roared the Pennington stands.

"Hold 'em, Bartlett!" entreated the supporters of the Black and Gold.

An end run netted five more yards, placing the ball on the twelve yard line. Gordon then took the pigskin, plunging straight through the center of the line for four yards. The Bartlett eleven

seemed wholly unable to cope with the swift, varied, smashing attack of the visitors. It was evident to the onlookers that Knapp's brilliant run at the start of the game, coupled with Gordon's tremendous line bucking, had completely bewildered the Bartlett team. It was the first time during the entire season that any eleven had been able to gain consistently through the line and this fact further discouraged the Black and Gold.

"Hold 'em, fellows!" begged Benz, from the backfield. "Don't let 'em get a touchdown!"

The line stiffened and shifted to meet the next attack. They were already fighting in the shadow of their goal posts. Gordon again carried the ball and the play came direct for Cateye. By exerting a great effort Cateye broke through the Pennington line and dropped the huge Gordon for a slight loss.

The Bartlett stands became a mass of color. Cateye's name was on every Bartlett rooter's tongue.

Pennington, as Coach Phillips had said, was using Gordon, almost exclusively, from the outset of the game, as a battering ram to wear down the Bartlett line. Once the line was shot to pieces victory would be easy.

The Bartlett eleven, encouraged by Cateye's checking of the Pennington advance, regained in a measure their lost confidence and every yard

thenceforth gained by the rival college demanded a royal struggle.

But Pennington was not to be denied the spoils of her rapid advance. Her dashing, smashing attack had progressed too far to be immediately and successfully blocked. Bartlett was beaten stubbornly back until the players crouched upon the very goal line with Pennington two downs to take the ball across.

The Red and Blue tried an end run but Benz tackled the man with the ball before he had gained a yard. Benz was fairly outplaying himself and sobbing like a baby.

The Bartlett stands shrieked encouragement, while from the Pennington bleachers came yells of, "Touchdown! Touchdown!"

On the last down, with less than two yards to go, Gordon ripped straight through the line and over the goal for a touchdown.

Amid a cascade of yells and wild demonstrations the Bartlett eleven lined up under their goal posts, awaiting the try for goal.

Knapp, the star Pennington quarterback, to whom much credit must go for the sudden overwhelming of Bartlett, threw himself face downward on the turf and held the ball at arms length to allow Bowen, halfback, to kick. Bowen paced a short distance back, carefully, then turned and running lightly forward, toed the ball squarely

over and between the goal posts. Score, Pennington, 7; Bartlett, 0.

The Pennington rooters began to chant the score with the hopes of further disheartening the Bartlett eleven. "We want more! We want more!" volleyed Pennington.

"Rah! Bartlett, Rah! Fight 'em! Fight 'em! Fight 'em!" answered the Bartlett stands defiantly.

There were seven minutes left of the first quarter. Pennington kicked off. Potts caught the ball and advanced it eight yards to the twenty-six yard line. It was the first time during the game that Bartlett had the ball in her possession and the Bartlett supporters were hopeful.

Neil called on Patterson, right half, for an end run, but the play barely netted a yard. Benz shot through the line for four yards. The Bartlett stands roared. Gary, left half, attempted a run around the other end but was downed with no gain. Benz dropped back and punted forty yards. The ball was Pennington's on their own twenty-nine yard line.

Using the same tactics as before and working one forward pass to advantage, Pennington began another steady march down the field. Bartlett was being completely outplayed in every department of the game. The quarter ended with the ball on Bartlett's seventeen yard line and Pennington's first down.

The teams exchanged goals and play started again. Gordon hammered his way through the line for nine yards with three tacklers hanging to him. The Bartlett defense seemed to grow weaker every minute. A trick play was good for three more yards, and with the ball on Bartlett's five yard line Knapp got away for a wide end run and a touchdown. The Pennington stands cheered madly. Why, this was no game; Bartlett was being outclassed! It had taken Pennington only three minutes to put over the second touchdown from the seventeen yard line. Bowen was forced to attempt the goal kick from quite an angle and the ball went wild. Score, Pennington, 13; Bartlett, 0.

Again Pennington kicked off. Cateye received the ball and advanced it back twenty yards in a pretty, dodging run. Neil tried vainly to enthuse the fallen spirits of his team-mates. They were not playing true to form; they were suffering the slump of the season and during the biggest game!

Benz was forced to punt again, the eleven not being able to make a first down. Gordon & Company started another triumphal march toward the coveted goal. This time the progress was easier than before. After each play several Bartlett men were seen to hobble wearily to their positions. The strain was beginning to tell. Soon the game would become a rout.

A fumble! Bartlett's ball! The stands came to life. Pennington's advance was at least momentarily checked. Neil called on Benz to carry the ball. He made three yards. Neil used him again. Benz tore off seven yards around end and Bartlett had made its first down!

Patterson and Gary, halfbacks, could gain very little on respective attempts. Neil was forced to call on Benz to make the yards. Benz was good for six. In a fake punt formation Benz tried a pass, but Norton, Pennington right end, intercepted the ball and carried it fifteen yards to the Bartlett thirty yard line before being downed. Bartlett's slight revival of form was thus ended.

There were six minutes left to play of the first half, and Pennington meant to have another touchdown. Every play was good for a few yards at least.

Cateye, who had played a wonderful game at left guard, was tiring fast. Knapp had chosen the left side of the line to direct a good share of his smashes at and Cateye had borne the brunt of the attack. Now, after each play, he was the last man to crawl upon his feet, and fall back into his position.

Pennington fought its way to the seven yard line. There were three minutes left in which to score a touchdown. Gordon took the ball, intending to drive his way through Cateye's position

for a substantial gain. But Cateye, calling forth one last, great effort, broke through and tackled Gordon for a one yard loss.

The crowd gave him a mighty cheer but Cateye heard it not. He lay where he had fallen. Benz rushed up, knelt down beside him, then motioned to Neil.

"Help me get him to the sidelines, will you? He's knocked out!"

Someone rushed up with a blanket and pail of water. Cateye was carried to the sidelines. The substitutes crowded around. Judd pushed them aside.

"Cateye! Pal! Wake up! What's the matter?" Judd shook him rather roughly.

Cateye began to come to. "My knee! My knee!" he gasped.

Judd jerked off Cateye's shoe and sock. The bandaged knee was already badly swollen.

Coach Phillips came to Cateye's side. "Tough luck, old man. You played a great game. Judd, take off your sweater. You're going in Cateye's place. It's up to you. Hold 'em!"

"Me? Naw,—well," Judd hesitated, glancing at his room-mate.

"Go in, Judd, and stop that Gordon! There's two more downs and two minutes to play. Don't let 'em make a touchdown!" Cateye pleaded.

Judd still lingered, uncertain.

A strange voice was heard outside the group. "Let me in I say! That man was my former room-mate!"

"Why,—Bob Billings!" exclaimed Cateye, delighted, and forgetting his badly wrenched knee for the moment. "I didn't know you were here!"

"Just arrived a few minutes before the game started," replied the great Bob, reaching out and grabbing his open-mouthed younger brother, "Hello, Judd! What are you doing standing here? The crowd's calling for you. I supposed you'd gone out. Hurry up! Don't stop to argue. It's time for play to begin again. I'll see you at the end of the first half. Save the game, old man!"

Without a word Judd ripped off his jersey and dashed out upon the field. So Bob was here! And Cateye laid out! And,—Bartlett was being beaten! Well, he'd do his best to please Bob and Cateye, but how could he save the game? "Gosh!" thought Judd, "The game's lost already!"

Nevertheless he jumped peppily into Cateye's position. Just as his presence had inspired the second team so did his presence now cause new life to appear in the varsity.

Benz rushed up to Judd, throwing an arm about his shoulders. What did this mean? Another trick? But—no—it couldn't be——! that look in Benz's face and then—Benz was holding out his hand! Judd gripped it in a daze as the stands

roared. All this action took place in two minutes time but to Judd it seemed like hours. So much had happened in those two minutes! And here Judd found himself actually playing in Cateye's position, something he had vowed that he would never do! Besides this, Benz had become his friend. Wonder of wonders!

But Judd had no more time to contemplate. The referee's whistle shrieked, and he became painfully aware that he was in the direct path of the onslaught. He braced himself; hit the opposing line low, and as a mass of legs passed over him he grabbed an armful and hung on. The roar in the stands became a rumble. Judd had stopped the great Gordon without a gain!

He staggered to his feet, a numb feeling in one hand, and Benz patting him joyfully on the back.

"Get him just once more, Rube, old man," yelled Benz, in his ear, "and it'll be *our* ball!"

Judd crouched in his position, his whole being concentrated on one object, Gordon. Would they use him again? Or might Pennington resort to some trick play to put the ball across?

Judd saw Knapp look at Gordon as he knelt to receive the ball; he saw the ball snapped back; saw Gordon dash forward and apparently take it from Knapp's hands, plunging into the other side of the line. All was confusion. All were mislead but Judd. He burst through his side of the line just

as Gordon started forward. He saw the fake pass; saw all his team-mates lurch toward the right in a frantic effort to stop the much feared Gordon. But above all this he saw Knapp, running free, with the ball tucked under his arm!

And Knapp saw Judd, the only obstacle between him and a touchdown. Seven yards to go! Time almost up! Knapp ran straight at Judd; then as the rube dove for a tackle, he jumped clear.

Pennington gave a lusty cheer,—then a groan of dismay, for Judd had rolled quickly over and made a frantic grab at the flying feet as they passed him. His right hand came in contact with Knapp's right ankle and closed over it like a vice. Knapp fell his full length prone upon the ground. Such a cheer as went up from the Bartlett stands! Everyone was on their feet lauding Judd. And just then the whistle blew calling time for the first half.

It was a much different team that left the field after that last two minutes of play. A new spirit now prevailed. Although woefully battered, outgeneraled, and outplayed, beaten by a 13 to 0 score, Judd's presence had produced the tonic which revived their spirits and restored the punch which had been sadly lacking.

Benz and Neil escorted Judd to the sidelines whispering happily in his ears.

"You stopped 'em, old fellow! You saved an-

other touchdown! Great stuff! Just wait until next half!"

"Say!" exploded Judd, ignoring the praise, "That little sucker is a spry one, isn't he? A shoestring more an' I'd never have caught him!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SECOND HALF

Bob rushed out and greeted Judd before he reached the sidelines.

"Fine work, old man! You're a wonder! I knew you would be if they ever gave you a chance. Why, say, it was worth coming a hundred miles just to see those two plays! Shake hands, Buddy. You don't know how glad I am to see you. Hold on, what's this,—blood?"

"Yep," grinned Judd, gazing a bit ruefully at his right hand which was swollen and bleeding. "That big jumbo Gordon put his foot on it."

"Here, let me fix it for you." Bob hunted up some tape and bandages.

Judd sat down in the circle of football men. Coach Phillips had a kind word for every man. He praised Judd especially for his great work during the last two minutes of the first half. The rube's face glowed with pleasure. For the first time he was beginning to feel the college spirit and a great ambition surged up within him for Bartlett to win the game. But the word which gave him deepest satisfaction and fired him with determination came from Cateye.

"I'm proud of you, pal. Remember—you're fighting for Bartlett and for me!"

A tremendous roar swept across the field as the two teams trotted upon the gridiron for the beginning of the second half.

Judd was given another cheer by the Bartlett stands. He seemed totally oblivious of it all.

Benz shouted to him. "Rube, they're cheering you!"

"Are they?" was the rube's careless rejoinder.

The coach had told him to watch Gordon and Judd intended above all else to follow instructions closely.

Pennington kicked off. Judd watched the ball sail into the air; then realized, with a sudden start, that it was coming to him! He braced himself for the catch. Benz and Potts shot past him.

"Follow us!" they shouted.

The stands were yelling wildly. Judd dodged in behind his interference. He crossed three white chalked lines without trouble. Then the interference crumpled and went down in a heap. Judd saw a big, dark looking face come close to his own, and eager outstretched arms. Instinctively he stuck out his hand and the face vanished. But another and yet another figure loomed up ahead! Judd turned to the left hoping to escape, but he was struck by two tacklers, one from each side. He crawled to his feet with team-mates thumping

him on the back, and looked about him. The ball was on Pennington's forty-five yard line. Judd had made a twenty-five yard run!

He had barely time to catch his breath. Neil was yelling signals and the next play came straight through his position. Judd strained every muscle, felt the opposing line give, and saw Benz shoot through for a six yard gain. A succession of plays gave Bartlett first down!

But Pennington was fighting desperately. Although Bartlett rushed the ball to the twenty yard line it went over on downs and Pennington punted out of danger.

The greater part of the quarter was very evenly contested. The ball changed hands many times, neither team being able to gain consistently. Judd's great defensive work, he seeming to be in the heart of every play, helped wonderfully toward breaking the backbone of the Pennington offense.

In the latter part of the quarter, with the ball in Bartlett's possession on the fifty yard line, Benz negotiated a pretty twenty yard run around the left end of the line. While making a sharp turn to avoid a tackle, however, Benz sprained his right ankle. Time was taken out and the ankle bandaged up.

This was a serious blow to the team as Benz had been called into service extensively to punt

Bartlett out of danger. He also had been the best ground gainer. The team was again disheartened as they changed goals prior to the playing of the last quarter.

Judd sensed the drooping spirits of his teammates and called out encouragingly: "Never mind that, pals. Let's die fightin'. We're not whipped yet!"

Pole and Potts, right end and tackle, respectively, were both badly bruised and exhausted, but game to the core. Benz was staying in the line-up though he could scarcely stand. Left tackle, Oole, playing next to Judd, had done nothing for the last five minutes, but fill the gap at his position. The rube had been doing the work of two men most of the quarter. The score still stood, Pennington, 13; Bartlett, 0.

The last quarter opened with Bartlett's ball on Pennington's thirty yard line. Now that Benz was practically laid out, Neil called upon Patterson and Gary to do the bulk of the work in carrying the ball. Bartlett made a slow but steady advance. Neil, finding that Judd opened big holes on every play, sent most of his plays through that side of the line. Benz limped along, helping what he could as interference.

The stands were quieter now. The great game was three-quarters over. Bartlett had put up a wonderful fight against a much better team, and

lost. The Penningtonites were just toying with them now, playing a defensive game.

But, what's this? The stands came to life with a jump and a howl! Neil, quarterback, had taken the ball and dodged through a hole in the line made by Judd. He passed by his interference and the Pennington linemen. As he did this and entered the open field, Gordon, fullback, rushed in and made a clean tackle, hitting Neil so hard that the ball was knocked completely out of his grasp. Judd, who was following up on the play, saw the ball bound away and was after it. Instead of falling upon it he scooped it up and, although tackled by two men, he dragged them the remaining five yards for a touchdown!

"Rah! Rah! Rah! Rah! Rah! Rah! Rube! Rube! Rube!" boomed the Bartlett rooters.

"Bully work, Rube!" shouted Benz. "Say,—did you ever try kicking goals? My ankle's no good,—"

"Well,—I reckon I can if I have to."

Benz held the ball. Judd poised it to his liking. He seemed unconscious of the tremendous ovation the stands were giving him. Plunk! The ball whizzed over the goal posts! Score, Pennington, 13; Bartlett, 7.

"Say!" gasped Neil, weakly. "Take me out! I'm all in!"

The heavy tackle by Gordon had shaken him up

badly. Potts and Judd helped Neil to the sidelines.

"Rip 'em up gang! We'll trim 'em yet!" were his parting words.

McCabe, substitute quarter, alive with pep and joy at his chance, jumped in at Neil's place and helped revive the gathering spirits of the team, exhorting every man to do his utmost.

Judd kicked off to Pennington. McCabe, inspired by his first chance, shot off down the field like a flash, eluding the advance guard, and downing the Pennington runner single handed, on his thirty yard line.

Bartlett was now fully alive and fighting hard but Pennington was battling just as stubbornly. Pennington made her first down largely due to the work of Gordon who went through the right side of the line, three successive times, for big gains. Pole and Potts had been giving their last ounce of strength to prevent the Pennington line from breaking through, but to no avail.

A halt was called in the game and two other Bartlett subs, Thorpe and Preston, got their chances.

Now Pennington shifted her attack to the other side of the line and Judd, almost worn out, was called upon to give all the power he had to stop further gaining.

Knapp slipped away for another long run. The

ball was on Bartlett's fifteen yard line and eight minutes left to play.

A fresh man was now sent in to oppose Judd, and Pennington's determined drive toward the goal resumed. Judd had eyes only for Gordon. He dropped the big fellow twice as he tore through the line. An attempted forward pass failed. Gordon charged through the line for three yards, but this was not enough. The ball went over to Bartlett on her nine yard line.

Benz limped up, and grasping Judd by the arm, shouted in his ear: "I'll switch positions with you. You drop back and punt that ball out of danger! Punt it hard!"

"But I've never punted in a real game!" protested Judd.

"Never mind that! You're the only man that can do it. Quick. Time's almost up!"

Judd needed no further urging. He took Benz's position.

"Hold that line, fellows!" he begged, as he held out his big hands for the ball.

"Get through and block that punt!" screamed Knapp.

The ball snapped back. The pass came high and Judd was forced to jump for it. He saw a form lurch before him and a pair of hands go up. Then he kicked. His right toe caught the ball squarely and drove it high and far down the field.

When it finally fell, McCabe and Thorpe were waiting for the man to receive it and downed him where he stood.

Everyone in the Bartlett stands had risen to their feet. Such playing, such a reversal in form, had never before been seen! Judd's punt had carried sixty yards! The ball was Pennington's on their thirty-one yard line and four minutes left to play!

Pennington made a desperate attempt to gain but Bartlett was growing stronger every second in her effort to recover the ball. Even Gordon's line plunges were repulsed.

Now the Pennington coach relied on strategy to keep the Bartlett eleven from threatening the Red and Blue goal line in the short time left. He sent in a substitute for the left end who advised Knapp to call for a punt. This Knapp prepared to do; Melvin, Pennington punter, dropping back to make the kick.

Benz saw the action with sinking heart. A long punt now with two minutes left to play meant sure defeat for Bartlett, and while they were within striking distance he felt a fighting chance.

"Break up that punt, fellows!" he pleaded, "You've got to get through and block that punt or the game is lost!"

The Pennington line braced for what they felt, the final effort. Judd, fairly outdoing himself,

flung guard and tackle aside and fell through. McCabe jumped over his prostrate body and leaped in front of the kicker. The ball struck him full in the face and bounded over his head to the forty yard line. Benz fell on it, joyfully.

McCabe, blinking dazedly from the blow, marshalled his battered forces for the last supreme attempt. Patterson made five yards on an end run. McCabe had his men up on their feet and into the game immediately after the play. There was no time to be lost!

McCabe had been especially drilled in trick plays as Coach Phillips imagined if he were used at all it would be toward the end of the game. He now worked the first one, a double pass behind the line, Benz hurling the ball to Gary who shot around left end for fifteen yards.

The great crowd had gone mad by this time! Timekeepers began consulting their watches. Pennington stands entreated their eleven to "Hold 'em" while the Bartlett rooters shrieked, "Touchdown! Touchdown!"

With half a minute left to play McCabe relied on a great trick play to win. The crowd was making such a noise that he had to call his backs in to give them the signals. He repeated these signals twice to make sure that they were understood, despite each precious second of time. The ball was on Pennington's twenty yard line.

The success of the play depended largely upon Judd and Benz, and a complete deception of the opposing line. Benz had been hardly more than a mere figurehead in the last quarter and Pennington would not be expecting him to carry the ball.

McCabe shifted the right side of his line over. The ball was snapped back to Benz. Judd swung out of the line and raced across as interference. Oole filled the gap left by Judd with his body, and—before the Pennington line realized the trick Benz was well on his way toward the goal. The play took nerve, a great amount of nerve, on Benz's part. He forced himself to run swiftly, bearing his weight equally on his injured ankle.

"Catch hold of my belt!" cried Judd, as he lurched ahead of him. "I'll take you through!"

Benz placed his hand on Judd's broad back and strove to keep pace with him. He stumbled dizzily across two chalk marks and was vaguely aware of shaking off some tackler from behind. A few more steps. Everything was getting black! His hand pushed heavily against the lunging Judd, for support. Then, directly in front of Benz, danced the jeering face of Gordon! He felt Judd's body slide away from him—lost sight of Gordon. There was a dark, struggling mound at his feet! He made a desperate jump and cleared it; fell forward upon his knees; crawled a few paces; then pitched over upon his face.

When Benz came to himself the great game was all history. A howling mob was upon the field dancing about a huge bonfire which dispelled the falling darkness. A few of his team-mates surrounded him.

"If it hadn't been for my sprained ankle, fellows," sobbed Benz, "I'd have made that touchdown. I,—I kept up as long as I could but,—but,—"

"What are you talking about, man? You made a touchdown!" yelled a Bartlett enthusiast.

"Me! Made a touchdown?" Benz was recovering fast now.

"Sure! You crawled over the goal line on your knees!"

"Zowie!—and then?"

"Rube kicked goal."

"Great snakes, . . . WE WON!"

Benz was too overjoyed and excited to speak.

At last, "Come on, guys, tell me a little more details. This suspense is awful," he begged.

"Well," volunteered McCabe, "It was the prettiest play of the game. You and Rube got away to almost a clear field. You legged it along all right for ten yards, then you commenced to limp. Rube slowed up for you and Knapp struck you from behind. But somehow you shook him off and stumbled on. Gordon came tearing up and dove at you but Judd threw himself between and

Gordon hit the ground like a ton of bricks. You jumped over the two of them and staggered on. My, but those were anxious seconds! At the three yard line you fell upon your knees and crawled the rest of the distance while three tacklers were beating it up to get you. Just as you reached the line all three seemed to hit you at once and knocked you forward. Then the whistle blew! When the referee untangled the mess and rolled you upon your back he found you froze to the ball, a foot over the line. Talk about a death grip—they had to pry that old pigskin loose! Say, Benz, after that,—you missed the biggest lot of noise that ever happened!"

"Tell me about Rube," pleaded Benz, "My touchdown only tied the score. His kicked goal won the game!"

"Oh yes," went on McCabe, "You made your touchdown at the right side of the field. Time was allowed for the try at goal. Rube was forced to attempt the goal kick at a frightful angle. The crowd was making such a demonstration, some people even running on the field, that I don't see how he ever did it. I held the ball for him. He took his time, fixed it just so; then stepped back. He was cool as a cucumber. The Pennington bunch glowered at him from between their goal posts. Then when the play came the field got suddenly quiet. Everyone was standing up hold-

ing their breath as Rube booted the ball. It sailed up, scraped the goal post, just clearing the bar, and the game was ours! After that, . . . skyrockets!"

"Say! Where is Rube now?"

"Heaven knows! A second later the crowd pounced upon him like a tribe of Indians. I thought they'd tear him to pieces. They carried him off with them."

"The lucky stiff!" laughed Benz, but there was no malice in that remark now.

The students bearing Judd faced about in front of the crackling bonfire. Cries of "Speech! Speech!" came from Bartlett rooters.

Judd sat on their shoulders, blinking from the light of the fire and stage-struck at the sea of flickering, ghostly faces in front of him.

"Say something, quick!" whispered McCabe, who stood eyeing the rube, proudly. "I'd give a kingdom to be in your shoes now!"

"You can have my place for nothin'," offered Judd, generously.

The crowd quieted down and waited expectantly. The rube was so well known and such a favorite by this time.

Finally Judd calmed himself enough to face the ordeal. He raised his head and looked out over the crowd.

"Fellows, before I say anythin' more . . ." he

started. But such a flood of laughter and cheering greeted these words that he could get no further.

"Gee!" complimented McCabe, "You've scored a touchdown from kick-off!"

Bob and Cateye came pushing their way through the crowd, supporting a limping Benz between them.

"Rube . . .!" started Benz, face beaming. "I . . . er . . . mean—*Judd!*"

Bartlett's hero of the hour grinned.

"No you don't Benz . . . you mean *Rube.* You couldn't really call me anything else and I wouldn't want you to. I reckon that name fits me best."

"All right, then!" conceded Benz, cuffing Judd playfully, "Though I claim I'm really the rube for calling you a rube!"

And then Cateye said something about the team's planning to make Judd next year's captain and Bob brought cheers by giving out that he was returning to college next fall.

"Gosh, that does me out of a room-mate," said Judd, suddenly, with a mischievous glance at his brother.

"Not necessarily," spoke up Benz, "What do you say, Rube, to . . . er . . . bunking with me?"

Benz and Judd—room-mates! This would astound the college.

"I've been known to talk in my sleep," Judd warned, grinning.

"*Yell* and see if I care!" accepted Benz.

And so, feuds ended, there came to one Judd Billings the tingling realization of what real college spirit meant. It had taken him all this while to get back in step after starting in college on the wrong foot. He had developed so very much in the past few years from a timid, awkward youth at Trumbull High who had fought so hard to live up to his brother Bob's contract—and later, as a Freshman at Bartlett, unused to the ways of the fellows but with his old-time fear conquered. But now Judd knew, happily, that he was one with all the fellows for a cheer was being proposed in honor of "Bartlett's Big Four"—Bob and Cateye and Benz and—Rube! And the ones who were responding to this cheer the loudest were his own team-mates!